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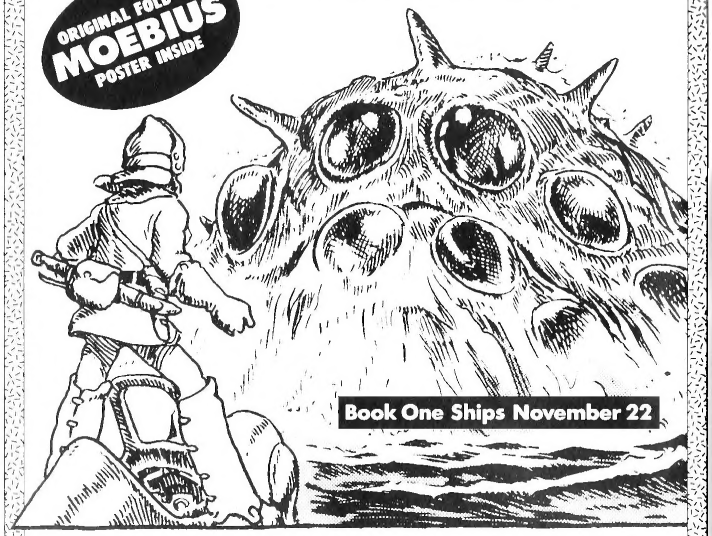

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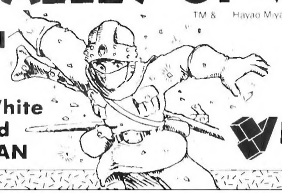

VIZ COMICS™

EDITORIAL

I don't feel like explaining this column when I don't have to, so just go read Michael Eury's "Video Views" column first and come back when you're done.

***

OK, now you know the rules of the game, let's play some more. I'll take Michael's questions in reverse order, because I want to work up to the one that will piss people off.

I have two comics I'd really love to see made into movies. First, some brilliant kid just out of film school with little or no budget probably wouldn't need millions to make a really superb adaptation of *Flaming Carrot*. Second, if a major studio ever wants to really go to town on a comic-book project, why not forget all this Marvel and DC adaptation crap and do *Zot!*? I know of no comic that cries out more for the big-screen, technicolor treatment. Oh, yeah. The best comic book candidate for the *Roger Rabbit* treatment is *Cerebus: High Society*.

The worst comic book adaptation to the screen is trickier. Michael's choice, the no-budget *Marvel Super-Heroes* "cartoons" get points from me for sheer ballsiness. I saw the Cathy Lee Crosby *Wonder Women* pilot when it first came out, but that was a looong time ago. I don't remember much either way. On those '70s live-action Marvel network TV shows I thought *The Incredible Hulk* was pretty good in its first season, missed *Dr. Strange*, avoided *Captain America*. I have seen a few episodes of *Spider-Man* though, and they are really, really bad. That cheesy net that some guy throws over the baddies to simulate Spidey's web kills me every time. But even the live-action *Spider-Man* has to take a back seat in awfulness to *Shazam!*, a piece of late-'70s kidvid that was simultaneously preachy, pointless, silly, and mostly just gawd-awful dull. OK, I kind of liked the part where Billy would stare at the lightbulb until he went to talk to the cardboard cutouts, but in my experience this is the all-time worst comics adaptation.

For best adaptation, I'm going to have to create two sub-categories. If you mean adaptation in its most literal sense, i.e. doing a film or show that translates all the good points of the comic to the screen without adding much except sound and motion, I'll have to go with the crowd and nominate the Fleischers' *Superman* cartoons.

(Ready for the blood-bath, folks? Hang on.)

But, if I can take a broader definition of the word "adaptation" and choose anything inspired by a comic book, I'd have to pick the *Batman* TV show of the early '60s.

That's right, good old BAM, POW, holy-bad-pun, ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-Batman! gets my vote. This show was a comedic masterpiece and one of the high points of American TV.

The formula behind this show was beautiful. Build the show around an established icon of American pop culture, and go on from there to satirize popular culture in general. Put in lots of action and special effects too, to broaden the audience and keep the show from becoming a mean-spirited parody. Lift your main character intact from the original medium, with just a slight exaggeration of his sillier aspects to let people know they don't have to take it seriously.

In its last two seasons the show leaned uncomfortably towards the farcical, but in the first season it was a perfect blend of slam-bang adventure, slapstick, and savvy satire.

Everything worked together perfectly in Batman, the sharp, hilarious writing, the huge, breath-taking sets, and most of all the amazing cast. The lead characters weren't brilliant actors, but they were perfectly cast. And the *Batman* villains were one of the most amazing assemblages of talent to appear on any TV show ever. Cesar Romero, Burgess Meredith, Frank Gorshin, Roddy McDowell. Plus frequent cameos from even bigger stars. The show had it all.

Of course, not all will agree with me.

In fact, judging from the consensus in the fan-press right now, if this column doesn't earn me a letter bomb I'll never get one.

Fanboys *hate* the old Batman, rabidly and violently. I could laugh this off as rampant Sidney Mellonism, but when mature, intelligent people whose opinions I respect, like Nancy Collins and even Dwight Decker [*see Doc's bookshelf, this issue*] express distaste for the show I can only shake my head in bewilderment.

You say the show made a mockery of the comic. Well, the producers were trying to put together a good *TV show*, and worrying about whether their show would reflect poorly on a comic book was considered, quite properly, to not even be on their list of priorities.

Anyway, they really didn't have to distort the premise that much, since in the late '50s/early '60s Batman was going through his most immature, silly phase ever.

I suspect what the show's detractors really mean when they say this is that the show didn't go along with the hard-boiled, film-noir Batman, a direction the character wouldn't even take for another 10 years, and which wouldn't become outrageously popular until *Dark Knight*.

You say the show didn't respect the character. I have to disagree. Bats was portrayed as amusingly square and old-fashioned, but he was also competent, brilliant, caring, brave and selfless. In a universe of buffoons he was always, at least, a noble buffoon.

But the argument that really torques me off the most is when they say that *Batman* set the development of adult comics back by playing up to the preconception of comics as kid's stuff. If anything, the reverse is true. *Batman* took the super-hero comic, which at that time was a medium exclusively for kids, and introduced such adult themes as satire and a sense of style. If comics were just for kids, why did so many adults love *Batman?* You say *Batman* set comics back. I say it booted them forward, and, in fact, made widely-popular adult comics a possibility.

Holy letter bombs, I'm out of space.

—*Chris McCubbin*

NEXT ISSUE: An in-depth interview with KLAUS JANSON. Look for the cover with *all* your favorite tough-guy heroes on it.

ANDY MANGELS tells you everything you ever wanted to know about the comics-inspired shared universe of *Wild Cards*, and even interviews series creator GEORGE R. MARTIN about upcoming *Wild Cards* projects.

And finally we "Face Front" and look back 20 years to the height of the Marvel Age of Comics. ●

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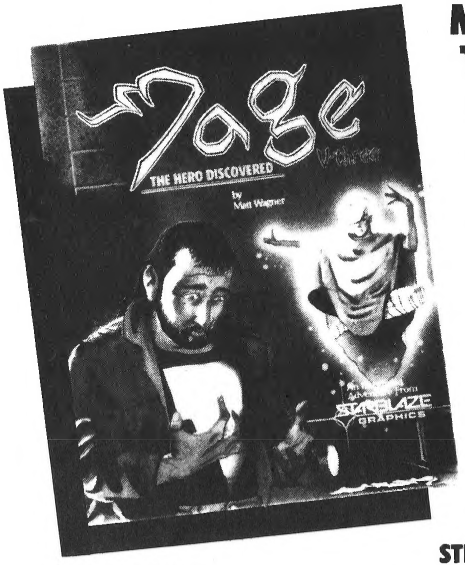

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NEWSLINE

MARVEL RECRUITING BIG-NAME S.F. TALENT FOR *AD ASTRA* PROJECT

Some of the top writers in science fiction will be converging on Marvel Comics to populate and landscape a shared universe for an anthology to debut next summer.

Laurence M. Janifer, Joe Clifford Faust and Barry Malzberg have already been enlisted to create the many worlds of *Ad Astra*. Janifer's stories have appeared in *Analog* magazine since that magazine was called *Astounding Science Fiction*. He is best known for his collaborations with Randall Garrett, one of which was nominated for a Hugo Award. His work has also appeared in *The Best of Omni*. Faust's first novel, *A Death of Honor* was on the preliminary ballot for the most recent Nebula Awards. He is currently working on a major SF trilogy entitled *Angel's Luck*. Malzberg is most known for his non-fiction book *The Engines of the Night*, a work of science fiction criticism for which he was a Hugo and Nebula Award finalist. His critically acclaimed novels include *Galaxies*, *Beyond Apollo* and, most recently, *The Remaking of Sigmund Freud*.

Marvel Direct Sales Manager Carol Kalish will be acting as editor on the project. She said *Ad Astra* will be along the same lines as *Thieves' World* and *Wild Cards*. The anthology takes place in the 90-year period following mankind's discovery of pseudo-faster-than-light space travel.

"It is a world in which all of the predicted environmental catastrophes have come true, and the earth is barely habitable," said Kurt Busiek, who was named managing editor of the *Ad Astra* project in mid-October. "The corporations have taken control and the military keeps order."

One of the major focuses of the anthology will be human beings fleeing the corruptions of Earth. According to a press release from Marvel, the first stop on this trip into the cosmos is Mars, followed by interstellar exploration bent on colonizing other solar systems. In the course of this journey away from a dying planet, humanity makes its first contact with extraterrestrial beings.

"People are leaving earth, but they never exactly leave completely," Busiek said. "They're kind of like fur traders or the people that originally immigrated to Australia from Europe."

According to Busiek, a respected literary agent in the field of science fiction and a comic book writer (*The Liberty Project*) as well, each prospective writer for the anthology is given a copy of the *Ad Astra* "bible" which contains the complete outline of the workings of the series' universe.

"Our goal is to create a future history as intricate and involving as those of H. Beam Piper, Isaac Asimov and Robert Heinlein," Busiek said.

Work has already begun on initial scripts for *Ad Astra*, but art assignments will be made later. Busiek said that, as stories begin to take form, artists will be given the assignments to which they are best suited.

"For the most part Marvel artists will not be used for the series," Busiek said. "Editorially, our plan is to bring people in to Marvel Comics. The artists may be people who are now in advertising or animation, but who should be in comics."

Ad Astra wants to enlist artists from outside the generally accepted Marvel talent pool, to add to that pool, said Busiek.

"We're not trying to steal from other companies either," he added.

Ad Astra will be published bi-monthly as a high-quality bookshelf edition, like the format used for Marvel's *Akira* and *Blood*. The anthology will be distributed in bookstores as well as through comics specialty shops. Each issue will have 48 to 64 pages long and contain three to five stories.

Kalish calls this "the first time comics have made a serious approach to an original science fiction premise," and emphasizes that "these are not adaptations."

According to the press release from Marvel, all of the writers who have been approached to do work for *Ad Astra* have expressed the desire to do comic book stories, but Kalish makes it clear that if a story is best-suited to prose, that is how it will published.

BYRNE IN FOR SIMONSON ON *AVENGERS; NEW SHE-HULK* READY TO GO

Marvel's sinewy She-Hulk will be given a second chance at her own monthly series beginning in January.

The series will be written and penciled by hero salvager John Byrne and inked by Bob Wiacek. Each issue will be printed in the format currently used for *Excalibur* and *Wolverine* and will be priced at $1.50.

In the press release Editor Bobbie Chase says that the goal for the book will be to pit She-Hulk against "all the strange, odd and eerie villains in the Marvel Universe."

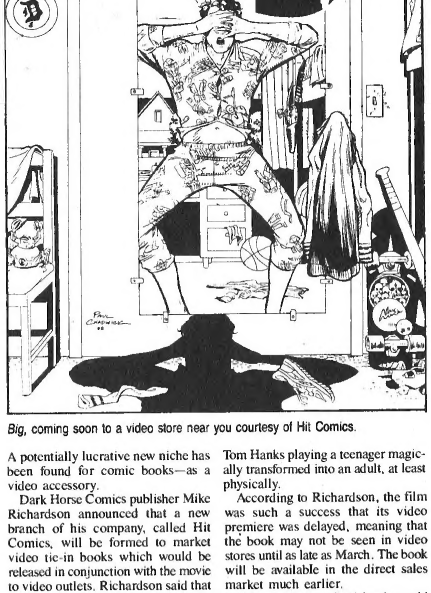
In the first issue She-Hulk will face off against the Ringmaster and his Circus of Crime, and issue #2 will feature the return of the Terrible Toad Men. The Head Men and Doctor Bong are also slated to return.

Early next year, Byrne will also take over as the writer on *The Avengers* for Walt Simonson, who quit the series unexpectedly in October. John Buscema and Tom Palmer will continue as the art team.

Byrne says he wants to take "a kind of *Mission: Impossible* approach" to both *The Avengers* and *The West Coast Avengers*, which he currently writes and pencils. Each team will have a core group of heroes and other members will be called to participate in missions as the situation demands.

Before Byrne joins the series, Mark Gruenwald and Ralph Macchio will write a special three-part storyline (issues #301-303) called "The Super-Nova Saga." This interim tale will bring back Starfox and the Nova Corps from the *Nova* series. Issue #301 of *The Avengers* will be penciled by Bob Hall and inked by Don Heck (one of the original *Avengers* artists). Issues #302 and 303 will be penciled by Rick Buckler and inked by Tom Palmer.

DARK HORSE MAKING *BIG* LEAP TO VIDEO STORES WITH NEW 'HIT' LINE



Big, coming soon to a video store near you courtesy of Hit Comics.

A potentially lucrative new niche has been found for comic books—as a video accessory.

Dark Horse Comics publisher Mike Richardson announced that a new branch of his company, called Hit Comics, will be formed to market video tie-in books which would be released in conjunction with the movie to video outlets. Richardson said that with over 30,000 video outlets in the nation, the new market might be 10 times as large as the direct sales comic market.

The first book to be released by Hit Comics will be a comic book adaptation of last summer's smash hit from Twentieth Century Fox, *Big*, with Tom Hanks playing a teenager magically transformed into an adult, at least physically.

According to Richardson, the film was such a success that its video premiere was delayed, meaning that the book may not be seen in video stores until as late as March. The book will be available in the direct sales market much earlier.

"The deal's all set," Richardson told *AH*. "The book's already being solicited in the CBS/Fox Home Video press releases."

Richardson also said that because Dark Horse has a "specific vision of itself" and its goals within the direct sales market, the formation of a new branch of the company was deemed necessary.

"We didn't want to dilute what we felt Dark Horse was," Richardson said.

The comic book industry will not be the only one to profit from this new marketing avenue. According to Richardson, the new relationship between comics and videos is one of reciprocal advantages.

"We offer video companies advertising to markets they may not have access to," Richardson said. "We find that the people who plug into direct sales are very interested in movies too."

Richardson said that advertising in Hit Comic books will be aimed to the video market.

A spokesperson for CBS/Fox Video agreed that the new relationship could be a profitable one for both the comic book and video industries.

"It is a market that will take time to develop, like any other," said the spokesperson. "But the potential is vast."

For the video market the full-color comic will be packaged as a counter display of 25 books, each costing $2.00. The comic book's relatively high price is tailored to the market, according to Richardson.

"Comic books fall into a 75¢ per unit category, whereas the video market is somewhere between $64 to $100 per unit," Richardson said. "What's a high ticket price in the comic book market is a low ticket in the video market."

No quality or integrity was sacrificed to delve into this venture, Richardson said, although it was one of the company's riskiest and most expensive endeavors.

"Traditionally movie comics haven't done very well," Richardson said. "Usually if the movie bombs, the comic bombs and if the movie is an incredible success, the comic is also an incredible success."

"We carried the Dark Horse philosophy into Hit Comics and we watched *Big*, saw it didn't go for the easy laughs and seemed appropriate for a comic book adaptation, so we put the best talent on it and paved the way for a future quality market."

Big will be adapted by writer Mark Verheiden (*Aliens*, *The American*) and new penciller Jack Pollock. John Nyberg (*Nexus*, *Plastic Man*) will ink the book and Paul Chadwick, the award-winning artist of *Concrete* will pencil and ink the cover.

Hit Comics is already working on acquiring the licenses for other films, but all of these projects are still dependent on the success of *Big*.

ULTRA GUY & JOE POWER COLLECTED IN BOOK

Ultraguy & Joe Power, most recently seen in the pages of *The Comic Shop News* and the *Comic Buyer's Guide*, will be starring in their own 200-plus page trade paperback collection from ParaGraphics this month.

The superhero humor strip by Ward Batty and Charlie Williams originally appeared in two comic book series: two issues of *Trufan Adventure Theatre* and five issues of *Boffo Laffs*. The strip concerns Guy Solomon III and Joe McGinty who went swimming right after eating and were struck by a bolt of cosmic energy. Solomon became your traditional super-hero, while Joe went for the big money and chicks. They are not rewarded according to the nobility of their choices.

The collection will feature 11 of the duo's adventures, including their full origins, super-hero dos and don'ts and a time-travel tale in which the two are transported back to ancient Rome, the old West and Nazi Germany. Selected other strips, including "Sister No-Mercy, the Ninja Nun" and "Nick Noir, the Private Dick with a Nose for Crime" will also appear.

The volume will be priced at $11.95.

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The Fine Art Of Graphic Horror

Atlanta Con-Goers Give Scott Hampton Positive Reception

Atlanta's Dragon Con '88 gave artist Scott Hampton the chance to see fan reaction to artwork from his adaptations of both Robert E. Howard's *Pigeons From Hell*, a graphic novel on sale this November, and Clive Barker's "Pig Blood Blues," part of Eclipse's upcoming *Tapping The Vein* series. "It was gratifying to hear what people really thought, to get that shudder when they found something particularly eerie," Hampton says.

During a panel discussion about illustrating the written word, Hampton talked about the difficulties involved in illustrating horror. "The problem is that horror is more effective when it's got an element of mystery," he says.

"There was a consensus among panel members and audience that the monster should be hinted at and not seen in broad daylight, which brought us to *Pigeons* and *Tapping The Vein*. With 'Pig Blood,' the horrifying element, the charismatic Henessey, is merely a presence within a murderous pig," Hampton says. "Horrific action— murder, even cannibalism—takes place, and it's graphic, but the real horror that lies at the root of it all remains hidden.

"With *Pigeons*, I had the limitations of a single place and setting. That was an obstacle for me to overcome, since it presented me with a consistency of tone and mood that wasn't there in the story I'm doing for Barker. In 'Pig Blood Blues,' the tone is constantly evolving to a really cathartic terrifying moment, as opposed to *Pigeons* which begins with a most unforgettable nightmare sequence and then slows down only to build up again.

"Pig Blood' also switches its emphasis a number of times between the two adversaries—they come into conflict, and it's that which must be resolved—but in *Pigeons* the emphasis is on the plight of one man who really has no adversary."

Fans agreed that the most terrifying bit of artwork was a double page spread of the house from *Pigeons*, which was called "eerie," "foreboding," and "scary." They were very much aware of it being moody and atmospheric," he says.

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phaze Takes On Future

Burke, Kayanan Release Steaming *phaze* #2

Art © 1988 Paul Gulacy.

"Well, I never thought I'd see it, but the second issue of *phaze* is now on sale," says writer Fred Burke, "and it looks like we'll actually be going on with #3."

The print run on *phaze* #1 was boosted by heavy orders from Waldenbooks, but the second issue's sex scene was deemed too strong for the Walden's audience, putting *phaze* on thin ice.

"I guess fans will have to judge for themselves," Burke says. "I honestly don't think it's that big a deal. Zeno has her way with E—which should please readers looking for a take-charge kind of female in their comics."

A novel of revolution on both a national and personal scale, *phaze* is illustrated by Rafael Kayanan in a bold new style. The science fiction series, which has been called "cyberpunk" by some, began with a number of disparate characters and situations in the first issue, all of which tie together as the series progresses.

"Although *phaze* has a strong ensemble cast in the superhero team book tradition, we thought it was a little off the beaten track," says editor Cat Yronwode.

But expanding sales to conventional book store outlets gave Eclipse the impetus to begin production on the series, which takes advantage of innovative separations and printing to bring Kayanan's detailed pencilwork and Steve Cliff and Reuben Rude's vibrant painting to life.

"If the book stores are going to be this squeamish, we'll just have to find stronger sales in the comic shops for *phaze* to stay alive," Burke says. "If you read the book, tell your friends—and tell your retailer to try upping their order by even one copy."

Featuring a cover by Paul Gulacy, *phaze* #2 retails for $2.25 and is now on sale.

THIS IS *FIT TO PRINT* NUMBER 233: It's been a while since I just sat down and wrote a letter to you, and I hope you want to read one, 'cause that's what this is.

I've been pretty busy with the comic books lately, especially *Brought to Light* and the Humphrey Bogart biography. You'll see them when they come out, I guess, so there's no point in going on about them here. The rest of my life has been pretty busy, too.

Three weeks ago I bought a pair of Silver Spangled Hamburgs from a woman out near Felton, and last week we went to a local poultry show and bought three pullets: a Buff Wyandotte, a Golden Laced Wyandotte, and (at last, at last!) a Golden Penciled Hamburg. The Buff Wyandotte is a particularly attractive bird. She is the colour of ripe big, pale orange cat, Bob Kitty. Sort of a palomino chicken. I named her Big Blon' Baby, after the Jerry Lee Lewis song.

The first rain fell yesterday. Today the sky is clearing up, and I wish it was the weekend, because the best time to plant native flowers (California Poppies, Tidy Tips, Chinese Houses, and that kinda stuff) is right after the first rain. But if it keeps on clearing, it'll be dry by Saturday, and I'll have to wait until the next rain to plant them.

The reason I'm so anxious to put the natives in is that we have just moved the driveway, and I have a couple of large bare spots to cover where it used to be. Oh, I forgot to tell you about moving the driveway, didn't I?

Well, the new driveway runs right up through the smaller apple orchard and ends at the barn. We moved it so we can eventually screen the house from the road with a three-layer hedge of flowering trees, shrubs and flowers (Date Palm, Catalpa, Crepe Myrtle, Oleander, Forsythia, Viburnum, Lilac, Rose, Narcissus, Weigonia, Agapanthus, Iris, Freesia, Scilla, Anemone, Yucca, Ixia, Sparaxis, Kniphophia, etc.).

I know what you're thinking: Since I've got to get something onto me earth before the heavy rains wash the soil out, why not just put in some grass where the old driveway was? Well, grass would be okay for a quick fix, but it would mean having to rip it out again when the permanent planting went in.

If I could afford all those above-listed plants at once (and had the time to get them in place in one season), I'd plant grass now and get Dean to till it under when the trees and shrubs were ready. But at the rate my finances and time allow, it's going to take at least three years to fill the entire area, and I'm afraid that the grass will have formed a sod by then and I'll be stuck weeding it out for years to come.

The native flowers (especially the California Poppies) may reseed themselves, but I won't be unhappy if they do, because they'll fit in with anything, and they'll keep the area under cover until the permanent plantings go in.

I guess that about covers my progress report, er whatever. As for Dean, he has started putting in the wainscot cap moulding in the upstairs hall, and is about to replace the plain door and window casings up there with fancy milled Victorian case mouldings (with plinth blocks to match, of course). I'm supposed to help him with the painting, but you know me—I just hate staying indoors when I could be outside. When it rains again, I'll paint. Until then, I'll be grubbing in the dirt.

So, how are things with you folks, huh? Read any good books lately? (I'm just finishing Jack London's "The People of the Abyss," a grim 1902 documentary on homelessness in Britain which, incidentally, may contain the first usage of the term 'street people.')

And how 'bout them candidates? You ever see anything more mind-numbing? I'm voting, as always, but I'm not too hopeful about the outcome.

Well, I'm outta space, so that is it for this letter. Write soon and I'll try to write back when I get some time. Your pal, cat.

Heading this time by MARC CRISAFULLI.
To see YOUR name in boldface type and your art or lettering here, make FnP logos 8 1/2 inches wide by 3 inches deep and send photocopies to catherine yronwode, p.o. box 1099, forestville, california 95436

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Eclipse Searches For *Air Fighters Comics* #6

Popular Airboy Reprints Definitely Not Cancelled

Eclipse is looking for a copy of *Air Fighters Comics* Vol. 1 #6 in order to continue its successful *Air Fighters Classics* reprint series.

"We've exhausted all of our normal avenues," says publisher Dean Mullaney, "and haven't been able to locate a copy anywhere. Surely someone out there can find, sell, or loan us *Air Fighters Comics* #6."

The copy must include all pages and the cover in good condition. The colour will be photographically removed for the black and white reprint facsimile edition.

"Ideally, we'd prefer to purchase the book, but if it's a prized part of someone's collection, we will do our utmost to return it in the same condition we borrow it," Mullaney says.

"We had no idea that *Air Fighters Classics* was such a cult favourite," says editor-in-chief Cat Yronwode. "The delay in publishing this fifth book in our *Air Fighters Classics* series has caused many fans to write—and even a few to call.

The answer is no—we haven't cancelled *Air Fighters Classics*," she laughs.

Air Fighters Classics chronologically reprints each issue of the original Hillman Airboy's premiere title and includes stories which center on Skywolf, The Flying Dutchman, Iron Ace, and Black Angel. The eighties incarnations of these characters can be found in Eclipse's own *Airboy* title and the Super-Series *Total Eclipse*.

Reviewer Dwight Decker, writing in *Amazing Heroes*, said *Air Fighters Classics* is a "reprinting project [that] shouldn't be missed." "But, says Yronwode, "it *will* be missed if we can't find a copy of the next issue to reprint!"

Serious offers may be directed to Yronwode or Mullaney at (707) 887-1521.

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ECLIPSE COMICS™ TOP OF THE NEWS PAGE 10

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Pigeons From Hell

Ramsey Campbell Pens Intro To Howard, Hampton Album

Acclaimed author Ramsey Campbell has written the introduction to the Scott Hampton adaptation of Robert E. Howard's *Pigeons From Hell*. The November graphic album will premiere Eclipse's new line of high-quality horror adaptations, which will continue in 1989 with Clive Barker's *Tapping The Vein*.

Of Howard's relatively few horror stories, writes Campbell, *Pigeons From Hell* best displays the emotions of fear and dread suspense. "Written in 1934 but published posthumously, it was suggested by stories told to Howard by his paternal grandmother Eliza," Campbell says.

"All the gloominess and dark mysticism of the Gaelic nature were hers, and there was no light and mirth in her," Howard wrote to H. P. Lovecraft in 1930.

"The story," Campbell says, "has all the intensity and relentlessness of the nightmares that had beset Howard since early childhood. May it also, like Frank Belknap Long's 'The Space Eaters,' have been an attempt by a friend and admirer to outdo Lovecraft for horror? While Long's tale contains a character modelled on Lovecraft himself, Howard's protagonist Griswell—a lanky New Englander given to cries of 'I must be mad'—would be more at home in Lovecraft's tales than in Howard's other work," Campbell comments.

"If the power of Howard's tale is worthy of Lovecraft, Scott Hampton's adaptation is worthy of Howard," continues Campbell. "Not only is it one of the most faithful and painstaking translations of a tale of terror into graphic form that I have ever seen, but it conjures all the atmosphere of oppressive decay and dread. As beautiful and subtle as it is horrifying, it is a triumph of its form."

Pigeons From Hell, in sale in plenty of time for Christmas, is Scott Hampton's fully-painted masterpiece. The 64-page 8 1/2" by 11" paperback retails for $7.95.

TOTAL ECLIPSE

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

The letters to Total Eclipse keep coming in, and the is where we print them.

Dear Sirs,

I was recently at a bookstore, looking for a comic book. As I was looking through the racks, I saw a graphic novel that I'd read about in a Comics Scene Quarterly. It was called Total Eclipse.

I decided to break my habit of DC and Marvel, and I purchased it. Several of the characters on the cover caught my eye.

Anyway, I went home and read it. I was thoroughly impressed. I really liked the characters, especially Artery. Slywolf. Valkyrie and both of the Prowlers.

I've bought the first issue of the Valkyrie! three-issue limited series. I enjoyed it, but have not yet purchased the other two issues.

The "Who's Who in Eclipse" feature in Total Eclipse was also very nice. Since I wasn't very familiar with the Eclipse characters, I really enjoyed it. It was a nice touch.

I also saw the ad in the book that says I can get a free comic and a catalogue. Enclosed is my 50 cents for postage.

I have two more things to say. Or write. The Prowlers deserve their own series. And I think that Total Eclipse would make an awesome role playing game!

Sincerely,

Brad L. Ray
1406 Lee Drive #59
Bellevue, NE 68005

Welcome aboard the Eclipse cruise ship, Brad! We're glad you've decided to "break your habit" and give us a try.

As for the Prowlers, Lon and Scott, they HAVE their own series, or rather, their series of series. The first four-issue Prowler limited series, title called The Prowler, and it dealt with the origins of both the elf and the new characters. The second four-part mini-series was Revenge of the Prowler. It shows how Scott is coming to accept Lon's vigilante ambitions, at least when faced with extremely wicked criminals. The third Prowler series is actually a bike one-shot called The Prowler in "White Zombie," and it features the old Prowler, in his youth, going up against a voodoo master in Haiti. The plot is based on the classic horror movie, White Zombie, starring Bela Lugosi as Murder LeGendre. So go back in that bookstore and ask to see their back stock of Prowler comics. If they are all sold out locally, write to our back issue department and we can sell them to you by mail.

There is also more to the Valkyrie! story than you might have seen. In addition to the 1988 three part mini-series you've started reading, there was a also a 1987 Valkyrie! three-parter. It's pretty hard to find copies of that first mini-series these days (Paul Gulacy did the art and it was a quick sell out at most stores), so we reprinted the three issues as a graphic album called Valkyrie: Prisoner of the Past. Ask for it by name!

Dear Eclipse,

I'll admit it. I was only going to buy Total Eclipse *because of the Bill Sienkiewicz covers. Of course, after I bought the first two issues, I had to read them.*

Surprise! They're GOOD!

My main fear was that Aztec Ace, Miracleman, and The Prowler (Lee, not Scott), *three of the most "adult" superheroes known, would be reduced to childish imitations of themselves, to bring them down to the level of the heavy-action heroes like Arbey and Strike. (I like Arbey and Strike, but you know what I mean. I hope.) Having the regular creative teams do back-up stories is great. The Aztec Ace story by Moench and Go in TE #2 was cool. Congratulations also to Marv Wolfman for getting all the characters "right" in the lead story. So far, so good. I await the promised Beaux-world cross over with mixed dread and anticipation.*

Aztec Ace Fan #23,
Peter Singer
307 N. Ann St.
Columbia, MO 65201

Thanks for writing, Peter. ...and let us know how the Beaux-world cross over hits you, okay?

October Full Of Tricky Treats

Eclipse Announces Rescheduling Of In-Demand Books

"I have seven film October ship dates on books that have been moved on our schedule," says distribution manager Sean Deming.

October 4 will see the release of the adult science fiction adventure *Rune* #2, by Fred Burke and Rafael Kayanan.

The international anthology *Merchants of Death* #3 will ship October 11, along with *The Prowler In White Zombie* #1, by Michael Price and Gerald Forton.

On October 25, the conclusion of Chuck Dixon's *Skyroll* mini-series, issue #3, will ship, with art by Enrique Villagran. Then *Airboy* fans will have issue #44, by Chuck Dixon and Stan Woch. The third rescheduled book shipping that day is Zanotto and Barreiro's hot *New York Year Zero* #4.

And, if you didn't get enough tricky treats in October, *Total Eclipse: The Seraphim Objective* will ship November 1. The Liberty Project star in this tie-in by Kurt Busiek and James Fry.

Also in October, expect to see the *California Girls Paperdolls* by Trina Robbins, Dan O'Neill's *Farewell To The Gipper*, and the much-awaited *Iran/Contra Scandal Trading Cards* by month's end.

November will feature two fan-favourites, with *Total Eclipse* #3 and *Miracleman* #15 on the schedule.

"People who have been calling will be pleased to know that these books ship shortly," says Deming. "Delays are due to a variety of causes, ranging from production problems to illness on the part of the creators. We'll always do our best to keep the public informed when delays occur—and provide you with new ship dates whenever possible."

SHIPPING 8/27/88
The Dreamery #12
Kamui #34
Xenon #21
Phaze #2

THIS IS FIT TO PRINT NUMBER 232: Spots before my eyes.

THROID: Last week, the weirdest thing happened. I was typesetting some stuff on the Macintush and, as usual, once I'd finished, I ran the spell-checker program to catch the goofs typos before sending the piece over for proofreading.

Our built-in dictionary has 60,000 words in it, give or take a few, and the program it's linked into runs a series of prompts to get you through the spell-checking process.

When an unknown word (like "Eisner" or "Sienkiewicz") comes up, the suspect word is displayed, along with a group of options to choose from. You can "replace" the word (type a new word in its place), "skip" the word (ignore it), "keep" the word (add it to the auxiliary dictionary), or "look up" the word (check to see if it's in the dictionary or the auxiliary dictionary).

"Look up" isn't just a way to find the correct spelling of a word you don't know. It's also a short-cut method to "replace" typos. When you "look up" a word, the program selects every word on file that varies from the suspect word by any one letter. These are quickly displayed, and you can mouse-click on the correct spelling, hit "return" and replace the misspelled word faster that way than you can retype it through the shower "replace" method.

So what happened was that i had typoed the word THIRD as THRID, and i hit "look up," expecting a rapid oiler of THIRD, which i would click into place with two key-strokes. But instead, i got a display that told me my options for known replacement words were THRD and THROID.

THROID??

What the heck is THROID?

I called everybody in to look at this weirdtaste, and everybody but Quinn, the kid who packs up the back issues, agreed that, even though THROID was not in Webster's or the O.E.D., it must be some sort of suffix, probably a scientific one. Quinn said it was "a mistake."

All that day, and all the next day, and even now, in fits and starts, my mental life keeps has been trying to find what word THROID is the suffix for.

METATHROID? LYTHROID? POSTHROID?

None of these words exist.

ANTHROID? No, that's actually ANTHROPOID.

PARATHROID? SEMITHROID? DIPTHROID?

No, these aren't words, either, although they *sound* like words if you say them with enough authority.

HEPTATHROID? NANOTHROID? SESQUITHROID?

I give up. There is no word that ends with THROID. I think Quinn is right. It's a mistake. Either that or it was deliberately inserted into the Macintush dictionary to help protect the copyright on the work, in the same way that Overstreet's *Price Guide* contains some "ringer" comics that don't exist.

Perhaps I shall go mad, looking for a prefix to fit the suffix that doesn't exist, the way some comics fans are said to have gone mad looking for that fake "Frazetta" book listed in the *Price Guide*.

ANTITHROID...GENOTHROID...
CHLOROTHROID...KETOTHROID...
HYPERTHROID...BIBLIOTHROID...

Stop! Stop!

PSYCHOTHROID...MEGATHROID
...TERRATHROID...CAMETOTHROID
...HEMATHROID...LIPOTHROID...
NEOTHROID...CYTOTHROID...(not for nothing did i study biology. I could call this all day!)...RHYZOTHROID...
PACHYTHROID...ENDOTHROID...
ECTOTHROID...BUFFOTHROID...

It's no good. I can't stop, and I can't find the answer...if there IS an answer.

Tell you what. Go to your computer right now and type out THROID and run it through your spell-checker, okay? Then it computer C'mon, I need a little help on this. It just my machine, or do all of 'em have a secret THROID hidden deep within their bowels?

Heading this time by DEAN HASPIEL.
To see YOUR name in boldface type and your art or lettering here, make FitP logos 8 1/2 inches wide by 3 inches deep and send 'em to catherine yron wade, p.o. box 1058, forestville, california 95436

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KORKIS AND CAWLEY LAUNCH OWN MAGAZINE, *CARTOON QUARTERLY*

Behind *Amazing Heroes'* back (in front of our behinds, even), frequent contributors to these trusting pages Jim Korkis and John Cawley have started their own magazine.

The *press release* they sent us (what if I sent my Mom a press release on her birthday?) lets the world at large know that the first issue of this publication, dubbed *Amazing Cartoon Heroes Quarterly* (okay, so it's really just *Cartoon Quarterly*), has done all right for itself: debuted the last weekend of September and within days sold out at newsstands and bookstores throughout the nation, people buying multiple copies for friends who can't find the thing anywhere, comic stores having to hide issues under the counter for "special" customers, the government considering rationing measures...

The magazine's about animation, so apparently hanging around the world of caped crusaders slowly moving through a series of neat and tidy little boxes wasn't good enough for Korkis and Cawley. Things have to flit along at 24 frames a frigging second to keep these guys happy.

To be fair, these boys have leapt into the *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* hysteria head first, that is intelligently, and come up with a pretty remarkable little product. The first issue featured an illustrious cast, including Jim Davis and some cat, the New Jonny Quest, Lenny Maltin from that ground-breaking foray into claymation, *Entertainment Tonight*, Beany and Cecil, Superman, the great and venerable Chuck Jones, and some helium-binging mouse from Anaheim. There's more, but nobody likes a name-dropper.

The magazine is published in Burbank, is, as the name suggests, published quarterly and boasts full color. Before we could consider a seedy career as a bootleg *Cartoon*

STAR TREK PLOTLINE TO BE WRAPPED UP IN NOVEL BY PETER DAVID

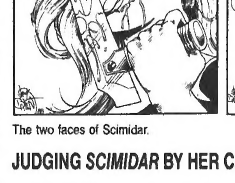
When DC comics' *Star Trek* series left readers hanging in space at the end of issue #56, with series writer Peter David's plot unresolved, many had about given up on ever seeing anything completely resolved aboard the Enterprise.

After all, issue #55 took up where #48 left off in an attempt to tie up all the loose space debris and then #56 was supposed to be self-contained, just in case contract renegotiations with Paramount fell apart. Well, when the series closed with #56 there was still enough plotline left to anchor a whole new series.

Luckily, David's plot will take up again in the Pocket Books novelizations of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. David will write the fifth novel in the series, marking the debut of characters in the TV show's second season. The novel will be called *Strike Zone* and David says it will resolve the plot from seven decades ago, *Star Trek* time. Among the questions that were left hanging in the DC finale was the identity of the Cognoscenti. David says that and more will be explained in the novelization.

The book is officially scheduled for a March release, according to David, but could be on bookstore shelves by February in some areas.

David emphasizes that the novel will be entirely self-contained. Yeah, we've heard that one before.



The two faces of Scimidar.

JUDGING *SCIMIDAR* BY HER COVER, OR LACK THEREOF

Judging a comic book by its cover will become harder this month as Eternity Comics ships issue #4 of *Scimidar* with two different covers, one for wussies and one for well, uh, horny sadists.

According to Eternity publisher David Olbrich this is in line with his plan to make *Scimidar* one of the most controversial titles in comicdom.

Both covers will be done by regular *Scimidar* cover artist Jim Balent, the "hot" cover featuring the lethal and lovely empathic tracker lapping blood from a very phallic 21st Century sickle and the "mild" cover showing her buxom, scantily-clad glory holding the buxom, scantily-clad glory of a mortally wounded friend. The direct order catalogue for Eternity emphasizes that the "mild" cover is "not really mild."

Effective the third issue, Rob Davis will take over art on the series, and there will be considerably more violence and selective garment removal. To insure the world will take notice of *Scimidar*'s new maturity, *Playboy* emperor Hugh Hefner will play a bit part in the upcoming saga.

Of course the covers will have no effect on the title's innards, only on its placement in comic shops currently huddling under the dubious cover of the First Amendment.

Ninja High School, one of Eclipse's most popular comics, will go monthly this month, starting with issue #8. The series, created by Ben Dunn, was previously a bi-monthly title.

MINI-COMICS: *MARS ATTACKS* THWARTED; *WHITE BOY* THRIVES

From the very marketable *White Boy Goes to Hell.*

The bubblegum card—sized mini-comic *Mars Attacks* will no longer occupy its unique place at your local comic book store.

According to Pocket Comics publisher Mario Bruni, there will be no box series #3, which was to contain issues #5-6 of the comic.

Although Bruni said that the comic, which was based on concepts created by Len Brown and Wally Wood, was just beginning to gain a foothold in the marketplace, he cites high production and paper prices as well as lagging sales as contributors to its demise.

Mars Attacks began appearing in the direct sales market two years ago with the help of Fantaco Enterprises, Inc., who served as a marketing house and main distribution center for the mini-comic. Fantaco also publishes the horror anthology *Gore Shriek*.

According to Bruni, the discontinuation of the mini-comic in no way reflects negatively on Fantaco. Their publishing and mail order business will go on as usual.

In a press release stating that Pocket Comics will not fulfill purchase orders on box #3, 4, and 5 of *Mars Attacks*, Bruni writes, "Hindsight is twenty-twenty, maybe my original idea for a full-size comic book format *Mars Attacks* trilogy in full color may have gone over better."

*****

"Mini-comics are the wave of the future; Dave Sim said so."

So say the entrepreneurs responsible for the mini-comic *White Boy Goes to Hell*, apparently undaunted by Mario Bruni's ill-fated Martian attack.

Harry Lyrico's mini-comic, sort of an antidote to the rabid Christian fundamentalist Chic mini-comics passed from sinner to sinner for the last 20 years, was originally published in 1983. The comic features the archetypal White Boy who reads comic books to satiate his darker urges and falls into hell after performing a Satanic incantation he learns from a comic book called *Monster Hunter*. He attempts to sell his soul to the devil in exchange for a more exciting life, the devil refuses because he is currently overstocked (presumably with the souls of bored suburban brats) and sends White Boy on his way up an endless stairway to the surface.

Now Fandom House in Denver, run by an entity named Dennis Pimple, announces that *White Boy* will be reissued as a deluxe, unsigned-and-numbered hardcover, a trade paperback, a portfolio, and a coffee-table art book. According to, er, Pimple, the decision to remarket the mini-comic is based on a glowing review which appeared in the fanzine *Comics F/X*, calling *White Boy* "the finest single mini-comic ever published. Ever, ever, ever."

The fact that Pimple has been out of touch with Lyrico for over a year also entered into the decision, Pimple said.

"You can't give a slice of the pie to someone who's not at the table, if you know what I mean," he said.

The first of the aforementioned products issued to a drooling public will be the $29.95 hardcover edition, according to Pimple.

"It's the same mini-comic with stiff covers and extensive art reworking." Pimple (can I make fun of his name yet? what if it's some guy's real name? but if I don't make fun of it, he'll think I'm slow on the uptake and show all his friends this story and laugh at me...) said. "We're looking into ways of stiffening the covers right now, and have it narrowed down to spray lamination or that clear plastic sticky stuff you can get for a quarter from the machines out in front of K-Mart."

When prodded, or lanced as it were, for a release date on the products, Pimple said something about something freezing over.

Well, it's a great comic anyway. White Boys everywhere could do with a dose. 75¢ will get you a copy from Fandom House, P.O. Box 1348, Denver, CO 80223.

DC REVEALS NEW LINE-UP FOR *SUICIDE SQUAD*

Starting with issue 24, *Suicide Squad* will have a new line-up of heroes. From left to right they are Ravan, Dr. Light, Punch, Jewelee, Duchess, Bronze Tiger, Vixen, Shade, Count Vertigo and Captain Boomerang. The creative team of writers John Ostrander/Kim Yale, penciller Luke McDonnell, and Karl Kesel doing inking will remain the same. The issue premiering the new Squad ships on January 10.

MORE *BATMAN* CAST MEMBERS ANNOUNCED: BOB KANE ENDORSES FILM

So, who's tired of all this bantering (battering?) about Batman before director Tim Burton has even had time to visit the photomat and buy the first role of technicolor? Must be a dark knight of the soul for any man.

Still Warner Brothers Studios is hissing with the slow leak of information and most of comic fandom is sucking frantically at the nozzle.

The newest blast of trivia from the studio came by way of actor Robert Wuhl's appearance on the Larry King show. Wuhl, it seems, has been cast as a reporter pursuing Vicki Vale (played by Sean *No Way Out* Young) and he was given permission to spring a major leak for the grizzled talk show host. During the course of the show Wuhl added to the cast list Jack "Believe it...or not" Palance as a mob boss; Billy Dee Williams doing a race switcheroo as Harvey Dent, the pathetic but goodhearted mayor (a promotion from his comic book job of District Attorney) of Gotham; Pat "Where did my other eye go? oh, here it is under my huge eyebrow" Hingle as Commissioner Gordon; and Mick Jagger's wife Jeri Hall as Palance's moll. Also there'll be a cool batmobile, based on the old cool batmobile.

In order to squelch rumors that the new film will not take the Batman as seriously as the Batman takes himself, Warner Brothers sent unto rankling comic fandom a man they could trust and respect, a counter-hiss as it were, Batman creator Bob Kane.

In the *Los Angeles Times* Kane admitted that when he heard that Michael Keaton would play his dear nightstalker, he "panicked."

But, according to the *Times*, Warner Brothers invited Kane to a screening of "Clean and Sober," in which Keaton plays a tormented yuppie substance-abuser, where Kane saw the light about the young actor. Kane has been pleasantly sibilant thereafter.

Kane admitted to the *Times* that he'd been chosen as "a kind of cheerleader" for the film, telling fans to "give the guy (Keaton) a chance." Of course, Kane (for pocketbook reasons perhaps?) likes almost everything connected with his Batman. He liked the TV series, he liked Frank Miller's *Dark Knight* graphic novel, he likes the idea of the movie, and he owns batploitation gear that even wet-brained teenagers didn't fall for. Kane, essentially, likes Batman. And who can blame him?

Also Kane, who was originally cast as a news cartoonist but nixed due to a shooting schedule change, will have a bit part in the film, so why shouldn't he be enthusiastic? You could count the reasons for his glee on one cash register.

A final burst of refreshing air from Kane, who said he told Jack Nicholson that "the Joker is not the buffoon clown that Cesar Romero played on the TV series. he is a psychotic killer--as ghastly as his perpetual smile." Amen.

"THE DIABOLICAL JOKER REMOVES THE ARMOR, STEALS THE ROKKER'S RUBY!
THANK YOU ALL GENTLEMEN. YOU HAVE BEEN MOST HELPFUL. WE SHALL MEET AGAIN!

Not a buffoon clown.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS: MARVEL ANNOUNCES '89 TRADE PAPERBACKS

One hardbound and eight trade paperback books have been slated by Marvel Comics for release in 1989, including the *Longshot* limited series, the Spider-Man vs. Kraven the Hunter story in a deluxe hardbound edition, the Thor vs. Surtur story, the "Trial of Galactus" from *Fantastic Four*, and a collection of Stan Lee/Jack Kirby monster stories.

Three deluxe paperbacks were announced for '89 by Epic. They are *Moonshadow*, a 12 issue fantasy series by J. M. DeMatteis and Jon Muth; *Blood*, a vampire tale by De Matteis and Kent Williams; and *Marshal Law* by Pat Mills and Kevin O'Neill.

Also planned for '89 are *Nick Fury vs. SHIELD*, *'Nam*, *Volume III*, and *Elektra Saga* paperbacks.

Viz Comics (*Jusry*, *Pineapple Army*) has hired a new editor, Stephanie M. Fowler, to replace Abra Greenspan, who had been an editor at San Francisco's Viz since it was founded in 1986. Fowler will edit and write for the Japanese manga Viz translates and reproduces in English.

Alan Grant will join *Invasion!* creator Keith Giffen as co-author of the new DC series *L.E.G.I.O.N. '89*. Grant writes Batman in *Detective Comics*, "The Demon" in *Action Comics Weekly* and the UK's *Judge Dredd*. Briton Barry Kitson (*Catwoman*, *Batgirl Special*) will pencil the series and former *Legion of Super-Heroes* inker will complete the team. The ongoing monthly series ships in January.

Former *Daredevil* artist Lewis Williams will pencil the "Speedy" series in *Action Comics Weekly* from now on.

Jack Kirby will provide a Demon cover for *Action* # 638. Kirby's comic book assignments are rare these days, and he hasn't done any work for the company where he created The Demon in several years.

The controversial Catwoman interpretation from Frank Miller's *Batman: Year One* will be continued in a four-issue mini-series in the DC Comics New Format. Editor Denny O'Neil has assembled *American Flagg* scripter Mindy Newell, *Firestorm* artist J.J. Birch and *Young All Stars*'s Michael Bair to flesh out the series, described by DC as "violent, brutal, realistic and definitely not for the young or squeamish."

An all-new creative team takes over for *Doom Patrol #19*. Grant Morrison (*Animal Man*, *Arkham Asylum*, the forthcoming *Batman* hardcover) will write the series, Richard Case (*Dr. Strange*) will pencil, and Carlos Garzon (*Cosmic Odyssey*) will be the new inker.

The first set of trading cards from Shel-Tone Publications will be *Freakcards: Portraits of Peculiar People* featuring 48 cards depicting 48 different human oddities. The title card and art for the back frame of the cards will be done by Drew (*Any Similarity to Persons Living or Dead is Purely Coincidental*) Friedman. Initially Shel-Tone will produce only trading card sets.

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AIRCEL COMICS

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☐ **ELFLORD #26.** Hawk and friends settle some scores before heeding for the Isle of the White-Haired Elves. By **Berry Bleir**. [*B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **KIKU SAN #2.** Kiku San explores the hidden kingdoms under the metropolis. By **Berry Bleir**. [*B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **SAMURAI #6.** Semurai and the forces of Black Dove launch an attack against Splinter headquarters. By **Bleir & McKeown**. [*B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.*]

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☐ **WARLOCKS #6.** More Werlock secrets revealed. By **Patrick McKeown, Barry Blair & Jim Somerville**. [*B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.*]

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☐ **JUNGLE GIRLS #2.** Three adventures with the savage jungle beauties. By **Bob Powell, Jeff Whiting & Bill Black**. [*B & W comic; $2.25; ships in Dec.*]

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☐ **VIETNAM JOURNAL #10.** Journel goes along to rescue POW's on the Mekong Delte. By **Don Lomex**. [*B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **VIETNAM JOURNAL: INDIAN COUNTRY VOL. 1.** A collection of *Journel* conteining the first four issues end a never-before-printed bonus story, trede paperback squerebound edition. By **Don Lomex**. [*Trede paperback; $10.95; ships in Dec.*]

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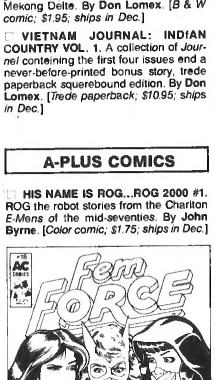

☐ **SPACE: 1999 #1.** Adapted from the TV series starring Martin Landau. By **Gray Morrow & John Byrne**; cover by **David & Den Dey**. [*Color comic; $2.50; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **THIS MAGAZINE IS HAUNTED #1.** Anthology containing pre-code material by **Steve Ditko, Dick Giordeno & Pat Moriel**, as well as new material by **Den Day & Patrick Hemou**. [*B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.*]

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☐ **RAMBO #2.** Rambo infiltrates e survivelist camp. By **Ron Fornier & Greg Espinoza**. [*B & W comic; $2.00; ships in Dec.*]

COMICO

☐ **COMICO CHRISTMAS SPECIAL #1.** 40-page speciel features five Christmes tales written by **Doug Wheeler**, eech tale illustrated by a different artist or team of artists, including **Steve Rude, Tim Sale, Chris Werner, & Bill Willingham**; cover by **Dave Stevene**. [*Color comic; $2.50; ships 12/6*]

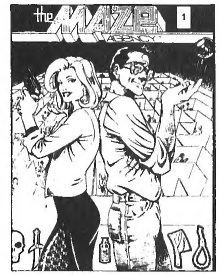
☐ **FISH POLICE #14.** More entics from fish with badges. By **Steve Moncuse**, color by **Trichie Schutz**. Includes a Fish Shticks back-up tale by **Moncuss & Stan Sakai**, creator and artist of *Usagi Yojimbo*. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships 12/6*]

☐ **GINGER FOX #4.** In the conclusion of this mini-series Ginger quits Peppertree Studios. By **Mike Beron & the Pander Broe**. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships 12/13*]

☐ **GRENDEL #26.** Introduces Eppy, who desires Grendel and hates God with equal fervor. By **Mett Wegner, Jay Geldhof, John Snyder** & hand-painted color by **Joe Mett**. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships 12/6*]

☐ **JEZEBEL JADE #3.** In the conclusion of this mini-series, Jede reaches the end of her quest among the Bones of Galahed. By **William Messner-Loebe & Adem Kubert**. [*Color comic; $2.00; ships 12/13*]

☐ **JUSTICE MACHINE #24.** The Earth/Georwell War reges on, finding Washington, *D.C.* end London in carnage. By **Doug Murray, Mike Guetovich, Dell Berree & Ken Feduniewicz**. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships 12/6*]



☐ **THE MAZE AGENCY #1.** Premiere issue of a monthly series featuring a beeutiful private detective, Jennifer Mays, and crime writer Gabriel Webb. Created and written by **Mike W. Barr**, with the ert team of **Adem Hughes, Rick Magyar & Julie Lacquement**. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships 12/13*]

CREATIVE ARTS

☐ **EXEMPLARS #1.** Premiere of a quirky, intelligent super-hero story by **Steve Johnson & Virginie Crookshanks**; art by **Bill Ingemen & Gerry Kissell**, colored by **G. Cerson Wright**. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships in Nov.*]

DC COMICS

☐ **ACTION COMICS WEEKLY # 637.** Featuring SPEEDY, by **Vernheiden & Wilfieme**; PHANTOM LADY, by **Strezewski & Austen**; SHOWCASE PRESENTS: HERO HOTLINE, by **Rozakis, DeStefano & Schaffenberger**; THE DEMON, by **Grant, Pacelle & Wray**; WILD DOG, by **Colline & Beetty**; and SUPERMAN, by **Stern, Swan & Anderson**. Cover by **Jerome Moore**, featuring SPEEDY. [*Color comic; $1.50; ships 12/15*]

☐ **BATMAN: SON OF THE DEMON .** A reprint of the award-winning 80-page Batman grephic novel by **Barr & Binghem**. Cover by **Binghem**. [*Color softcover; $9.95; ships 12/15*]

☐ **CHECKMATE #13.** Checkmate commender Harry Stein's femily vecation is rudely interrupted by Checkmete crisee. By **Kupperberg, Erwin & Wey**; cover by **Thfbert**. [*Color comic; $1.25; ships 12/15*]

☐ **DOC SAVAGE #6.** Doc menages to form a fragile alliance emong the mejor superpowers to fend off the Erisien menace. By **O'Neil, Whigham & Montano**; cover by **Adem & Andy Kubert**. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships 12/15*]

☐ **FIRESTORM: THE NUCLEAR MAN #82.** Firestorm is traumatized after killing innocent by-standers during the battles of the INVASION! By **Ostrander, Grindberg & Oe La Rosa**; cover by **Grindberg**. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 12/15*]

☐ **FLASH #23.** The Clipper returns...or does he? By **Messner-Loebs, Purcell & Mehletedt**. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 12/15*]

☐ **JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL #24.** Double-sized anniversary issue contains two stories. The first concerns Maxwell Lord's return to the master computer that manipuleted him into forming the new Justice League, and the second story introduces a new League team, JUSTICE LEAGUE EUROPE (who will have their own monthly title in e few months). By **Giffen & DeMatteis, Meguire, Seere & Rubinstein**; cover by **Meguire & Rubinstein**. [*Color comic; $1.50; ships 12/15*]

☐ **MANHUNTER #10.** Manhunter hendles the scientific refuse from the elien INVASION! By **Ostrander & Yale, Rice & Mercoe**; cover by **Rice**. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 12/15*]

☐ **V FOR VENOETTA #8.** An all-new story begins in which V bombs the monitoring systems and begins a people's uprising. By **Moore & Lloyd**; cover by **Lloyd**. [*Full Process Color comic, no advertisements; $2.00; ships 12/15*]

☐ **WONDER WOMAN #27.** Marks the return of the Cheetah. By **Perez, Marrinan & Blyberg**; cover by **Perez**. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 12/15*]

EASTERN

☐ **THE DEMON WARRIOR #13.** The Demon Werrior's mision to rescue the prince. By **Jae-Hek Lee**. [*B & W comic; $1.75; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **THE FORBIDDEN KINGDOM #10.** By **Sung-Nem Ha**. [*B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **STURM THE TROOPER #2.** Rampaging super-soldier seeks revenge. By **James Pek**. [*Color comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **TROPO #1.** Eastern's first Americen comic book by **Jon Macy**.[*B & W comic; $2.00; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **THE WILD #5-6.** By **Tae-San Chang**. [*B & W comic; $1.75; ships in Dec.*]

ECLIPSE COMICS

☐ **AIRBOY #46.** The Airfighters cleen up efter World Wer II. By **Chuck Dixon & Ernie Colon**.[*Color comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **ARIANE ANO BLUEBEARD.** The clessic opera ebout world-renowned spouse-killer Bluebeerd and his sixth wife Ariene is given graphic novel treetment. Sheet music and flexi-disk not included. [*Clessic formet color comic; $3.95; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **ACES #6.** Begins e new series with Mervin, a Hollywood detective. [*B & W comic; $2.95; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **APPLESEEO #4.** Athene tries to become savior of Olympus City's central computer. By **Messmune Shirow**. [*B & W comic; $2.50; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **DIRTY PAIR #1.** Coming to English lor the first time, an ell-new comic series based on Jepen's enimetion hit. By **Toren Smith & Adem Warren**. [*B & W comic; $2.00; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **THE DREAMERY #13.** A brend new centeur story by **Oonne Barr**. Full color cover by **Lele Dowling**. [*B & W comic; $2.00; ships in Dec.*]

ETERNITY COMICS

☐ **BLOOOBROTHERS #2.** A plot to kidnep the Sterbridge Administrator. By **Bill Spangler & John Gallagher**; cover by **Velentino**. [*B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **COSMIC HEROES #4.** Buck Rogers' adventures in the 25th Century. By **Nolen & Calkine**. [*B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **CRIME CLASSICS #6.** Features The

Shadow. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **DARK WOLF #10.** Dark Wolf investigates the sleying of a photographer. By **Jones & Burcham**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **DARK WOLF ANNUAL #1.** A self-contained complete story outside the normel continuity. Cover by **Tim Vigil**. [B & W comic; $2.25; ships in Dec.]

☐ **DINDSAURS FOR HIRE #5.** Cover by DRAGONFORCE artist **Dele Keown**. By **Meson, Carson & Roberte**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **EDGAR ALLAN POE: MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH AND OTHER STORIES.** Includes "Bernice" and "The Oblong Box." [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **EX-MUTANTS WINTER SPECIAL #1.** Ex-Mutant teem goes Christmas shopping, subterreneen style. By **Paul O'Connor & Merc Metos**; cover by **Jim Baient**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **50'e TERROR #3.** Pre-code horror anthology. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **NEW HUMANS #11.** The Methuselah Society searches for the source of immortelity. By **Paul O'Connor, Myke & Thomae Baxe**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **NINJA HIGH SCHOOL #8.** By **James Henrehen & Ben Dunn**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **PRIVATE EYES #3.** Featuring The Saint investigating illegel gambling. By **Cherterie & Sprenger**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **ROBOTECH: THE SENTINELS #2.** The Robotech Expeditionary Force preperes to leeve Eerth. By **Tom Mason, Chrie Ulm & John Weltrip**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships]

☐ **SCIMIDAR #4.** Can be purchased with either the "hot" cover or the "milder" cover (we ere essured it's not too mild). One's real naughty; the other's not so naughty. Both are by **Jim Baient**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **SHATTERED EARTH: EX-MUTANTS UNIVERSE ANTHOLOGY #2.** Features three tales of the shattered earth. Cover by **Jim Baient**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **SPICY MYSTERY GRAPHIC NOVEL.** Squarebound edition of Pre-code mystery and horror stories from the 30's and 40's. [B & W comic; $6.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **SPICY TALES #5.** More Pre-code stories reprinted from the 30's and 40's. Full color painted cover by **Steve Martin**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **THREE MUSKETEERS #1.** Classic novel adapted by **Paul O'Connor & Seppo Mekinen**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **TORRID AFFAIRS #1.** Collection of romence stories from the 50's. By **Mett Baker** end others. [B & W; $2.25; ships in Dec.]

☐ **TWILIGHT AVENGER #5.** By **John Wooley, Terry Tidwell & Tom Floyd**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **VAMPYRES #2.** Horror enthology. [B & W comic; $2.25; ships in Dec.]

☐ **VICTIMS #5.** Gient snakes end a foreign legion of the undead highlight this desert horror/adventure tale. By **Alen Hewetson & Suso**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **WILD KNIGHTS #9.** Zack discovers hie butchered friends. By **Evan Dorkin & Howard Simpeon**. [B & W comic; $1.95; ships in Dec.]

FANTACO

☐ **GDRE SHRIEK #6.** Horror anthology by **Bissette, Fuller, Stark** and others. [B & W comic; $3.50; ships in Dec.]

FANTAGOR PRESS

☐ **DEN #4.** Den battles for the sky above Neverwhere in these new adventures. By **Richard Corben**; also includes a 12-page work by **Corben & Jen Strnad**. [Color comic; $2.00; ships in Dec.]

FIRST COMICS

☐ **BADGER #46.** A Christmes story in which Badger gets some help from a surprise guest against Lord Weteriackus. By **Mike Baron, Ron Lim & Paul Abrame**. [Color comic; $1.95; ships 12/2]

☐ **GRIMJACK #57.** Geunt hires on serving warrants. By **John Ostrander & Flint Henry**; Special Christmes Munden's Bar by **Nat Gertler & George Booker**. [Color comic; $1.95; ships 12/9]

☐ **LONE WOLF & CUB #20.** By **Kolke & Kojime**; **Sienkiewicz** cover.[B & W comic; $2.50; ships in Dec.]

☐ **NEXUS #55.** A Gucci assassin (meking handbags is dangerous business these dayslo sent to kill Sundre. [Color comic; $1.95; ships 12/2]

☐ **WHISPER #23.** Burial alive, LSD and fate figure in Whisper's West Coast story. By **Steve Grent & Spyder**. [Color comic; $1.95; ships 12/9]

FOUR WINDS

☐ **MOVING FORTRESS.** A 64-page graphic novel illustrated by Argentinien artist Alcatena, MF melds images of Aztec and Medieval warriors. By **Berreiro** (translated by **Charles Dixon**); Cover by **Timothy Trumen**. [B & W magazine; $8.98; ships in Dec.]

GLADSTONE COMICS

☐ **DISNEY ALBUM: DONALD AND GLADSTONE #15.** Donald vs Gladstone Gander for four rounds, er, stories. By **Carl Barks**; cover by **Daan Jippes**. [Color comic; $5.95; ships in Dec.]

☐ **DUCKTALES #5.** A Disney Studio adventure called "Fountain of Laughs," backed-up by a Scrooge short by **Carl Berks**. Cover by **Daan Jippes**. [Color comic; 95¢; ships in Dec.]

☐ **MICKEY MOUSE #246.** In this 1950 story by **Bill Wright**, Mickey and Pluto battle giant ants. Also, two **Floyd Gottfredson** Sunday pages from the 1930s. Cover by **Bill Wright**. [Color comic; 95¢; ships in Dec.]

HERO COMICS

☐ **FLARE #4.** Flare and the Galloping Gelooper join forces to fight Viper, with e back-up story on the origin of the Black Enchantress. 52-page issue by **Dennie Mellonee, Vince Weller & Merk Beechum**; back-up by **Mellonee, Howard Simpson & Willie Blyberg**. [Color comic; $2.75; ships in Dec.]

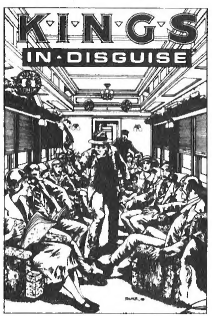
JADEMAN COMICS

☐ **BLOOD SWORD #5.** Hero end Kam-O duel to the death with First Fury. By **Tony Wong**. [Color comic; $1.50; ships in Dec.]

☐ **DRUNKEN FIST #5.** Samsun and his evil twin brother mester kung fu, by separate methods. By **Tony Wong**. [Color comic; $1.50; ships in Dec.]

☐ **FORCE OF BUDDHA'S PALM #5.** Ignorent peasants try to perboil Porky but the Drunken Kid comes to his rescue and bettles an evil crone. By **Tony Wong**. [Color comic; $1.50; ships in Dec.]

☐ **ORIENTAL HERDES #5.** Free-for-all on Coffin Island. By **Tony Wong**. [Color comic; $1.50; ships in Dec.]



KITCHEN SINK COMICS

☐ **DENIZENS DF DEEP CITY #1.** A new bi-monthly offbeet urben tale by **Doug Potter**, who created CHIPS & VANILLA. [B & W comic; $2.00; ships in Dec.]

☐ **KINGS IN DISGUISE #5.** Journey to the savage heart of Depression America. By **Jomes Vence & Den Burr**. [B & W comic; $2.00; ships in Dec.]

☐ **SPIRIT #50.** Reprint of a Halloween story, among others. [B & W comic; $2.00; ships in Dec.]

MARVEL COMICS

☐ **ALF #14.** Cuddly alien in "Night of the Living Bread." By **Gallagher, Manek & M. Severin**. [Color comic; $1.00; ships 12/15]

☐ **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #314.** Christmes issue. By **Michelinie & McFarlene**. [Color comic; $1.00; ships 12/15]

☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA #352.** Cap metches muscle with Soviet Super Soldiers. By **Gruenwald, Dwyer & Milgrom**. [Color comic; 75¢; ships 12/15]

☐ **DAREDEVIL #265.** Doredevil vs Mephisto, two out of three falls. By **Nocenti, Romita, Jr. & Williemson**. [Color comic; 75¢; ships 12/8/88]

☐ **EXCALIBUR #7.** New York is e demon-infested metropolis in this INFERNO cross-over. Not much is different but it's easier to get a taxi and the treins run on time. By **Claremont, Davie & Neery**. [Color comic; $1.50; ships 12/8]

☐ **G.I. JOE SPECIAL MISSION #20.** Joe and the Russkies' Oktober Guard team up just long enough to tight off e COBRA plot in the Bering Streits. Jeez, whatever happened to fascist rednecks with conviction? By **Hema,Trimpe & Muehynsky**. [Color comic; $1.00; ships 12/8]

☐ **TALES OF G.I. JOE #16.** A reprint of G.I. JOE #16. By **Heme, Vosburg & D'Agostino**. [Color comic; $1.50; ships 12/6]

☐ **G.I. JOE EUROPEAN MISSIDN #7.** G.I. Joe has, well, e mission in Europe, whet else? By **Abnett, Hopgood & Hine**. Storm Shadow back-up by **Rimmer, McCree & Wildmen**. [Color comic; $1.75; ships 12/6]

☐ **HEATHCLIFF #32.** Heethcliff mistaken for a cet burglar. Antics ensue. By **Karpinski, Post & Roettcher**; cover by **Kremer**. [Color comic; $1.00; ships 12/15]

☐ **MARVEL COMICS #17.** Colossus adventure (part 8) by **Nocenti, Leonerdi & Russell**; Black Panther adventure (Part 5) by **McGregor, Colen & Palmer**; Cyclops story (Prrt 1) by **Herris & Lim**; and a Triton tale by **Campanelle, Saltares & Merzan**. Cover by **Buckler**. [Color comic; $1.25; ships 12/15]

☐ **NEW MUTANTS #74.** Magneto takes control of the Hellfire Club. By **Simonson, Blevine & Williemeon**. [Color comic; $1.00; ships 12/15]

☐ **PSI FORCE #30.** The "world outside your window" yields 28-pages of violence and carnage. By **Nicieza, Remos & Ivy**. [Color comic; $1.50; ships 12/8]

☐ **SEMPER FI #5.** On the road with the United States Merines, this time the show stops in Nicaragua (matinees on weekends). By **Palledino, A. Kubert & J. Severin**. [Color comic; 75¢; ships 12/8]

☐ **SOLO AVENGERS #17.** Hawkeye and the Sandman team up to defeet Dr Octopus, by **DeFelco, Millgrom & Merzan**. Black Panther battles an ancient monster, by **Plunkett & Hempton**. Cover by **Plunkett & Hempton**. [Color comic; 75¢; ships 12/15]

☐ **STRIKEFORCE: MDRITURI #26.** Evil Moriturl prepare to take over the earth. By **Hudnell, Begley & De LaRosa**. [Color comic; $1.50; ships 12/8]

☐ **WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #49.** Spider-Man helps one of Mary Jane's friends "Just Say No." Ask me, Mary Jane should change her name if Spidey's gonna jump on this anti-drug bandwagon. By **David & Mayerick**; cover by **Vess**. [Color comic; $1.00; ships 12/6]

☐ **WEST COAST AVENGERS #43.** The Avengers looking for the remains of their pal, Vision. By **Byrne & Mechlen**. [Color comic; 75¢; ships 12/8]

☐ **WOLFPACK #9.** The Pack illustrate Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" credo to a gang o' street thugs. By **Figueroa, Wilson & Ivy**. [*Color comic; 75¢; ships 12/6*]

☐ **THE X-MEN in THE ASGARDIAN WARS.** 224-page trade paperback reprints the Asgardian Wars story which ran originally in X-MEN VS. ALPHA FLIGHT, NEW MUTANTS SPEC. ED. and X-MEN ANNUAL #9. By **Claremont, Adame & Smith**; new cover by Adams. [*Color peperback; $14.95; ships 12/8*]

MARVEL EPIC

☐ **GROO THE WANDERER #50.** Groo's 50th. Happy Birthday to Groo. By **Sergio Aragones** with **Mark Evanier**. [*Color comic; $1.50; ships 12/15*]

☐ **ST. GEORGE #5.** St. George defeats a Shadowdweller scarecrow. By **Chichester, Clerk & Jenson**; cover by **O'Neil**. [*Color comic; $1.50; ships 12/15*]

☐ **HAVOK & WOLVERINE: MELTDOWN #2.** Everybody in this issue might be dead, but what'd ya bet nobody is. By **Walt & Louise Simoneon, Muth & Williame**. [*Color comic; $3.50; ships 12/15*]

☐ **STRAY TOASTERS #4.** The final of four baffling, but fascinating, parts. By the baffling, but fascinating, **Bill Sienkiewicz**. [*Color comic; $3.50; ships 12/8*]

NICOTAT COMICS

☐ **BORIS THE BEAR #24.** Will Boris return from outer space? By **James Deen Smith, Steve Mettsson & Jim Bradrick**; cover by **Steve Lelelohe**. [*B & W comic, $1.95, ships in Dec.*]

☐ **MAN #2.** The battle between Man and the "guts glut." By **Steve Mettsson, Mark Jonee & Gery Mertin**; cover by **Chris Werrner**. [*B & W comic, $2.00, ships in Dec.*]

NOW COMICS

☐ **ASTRO BOY #17.** New dangers for Astro Boy and Girl. By **Ken Steecy**. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **FRIGHT NIGHT #5.** Peter and Charley take on Squidman. By **Jim Van Nise & Lenin Delsol**. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **RACER-X #6.** Racer and Stacy are saved by a man in a red suit. Is it Santa or could it be, meybe, SATAN? By **Waldron, Philipe & Thomas**. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **RALPH SNART ADVENTURES #6.** The sex, drugs and rock & roll issue. By **Merc Hensen**. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **REAL GHOSTBUSTERS #8.** More comic adventures in and out of the ectoplasmic plane. By **Van Hise, Tobies, Thomes & Powers**. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **RUST #3.** The new order of the South faces the wrath of Scott Baker. By **Llewellyn**. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **SPEED RACER #18.** More of the Racer family. By **Waldron, Philipe & Thomas**; cover by **Mitch O' Connell**. [*Color comic; $1.75; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **TERMINATOR #7.** The rebel team search for their leader in the suburbs of New York. By **Harmen, Tannay & Brozmen**. [*Color comic, $1.75, ships in Dec.*]

PIONEER COMICS

☐ **JOHNNY HAZARD #1.** New series. Reprints story and art by **Frank Robbins**. Cover by **Howerd Chaykin & Murphy Anderson**. [*B & W comic, $2.00, ships in Dec.*]

☐ **THE OFFICIAL BUZ SAWYER #5.** Reprints of **Roy Crane**. [*B & W comic, $2.00, ships in Dec.*]

☐ **THE OFFICIAL JUNGLE JIM #7.** Reprinting **Alex Raymond's** work. Cover by **Mark Nelson**. [*B & W comic, $2.00, ships in Dec.*]

☐ **THE OFFICIAL JUNGLE JIM COLLECTION #1.** Collects the first six issues, perfect bound. Cover by **Raymond**. [*B & W comic, $14.95; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **THE OFFICIAL MANDRAKE #7.** Reprinting the stories by **Lee Falk & Phil Devlin**. Cover by **Bratt Blevins**. [*B & W comic, $2.00, ships in Dec.*]

☐ **THE OFFICIAL MODESTY BLAISE #7.** Reprints of work by **Peter O'Donnell & Jim Holdaway**. Cover by **Wayne Vansant**. [*B & W comic; $2.00; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **THE OFFICIAL MODESTY BLAISE ANNUAL #1.** Reprinting in prestige format. Cover by **Vensant**. [*B & W comic, $3.95, ships in Dec.*]

☐ **THE OFFICIAL PRINCE VALIANT #6.** Reprints **Hal Foster's** art and stories. Cover by **Mike Grell**. [*B & W comic, $2.00, ships in Dec.*]

☐ **THE OFFICIAL RIP KIRBY #5.** Cover by **John Bolton & Murphy Anderson**. [*B & W comic, $2.00, ships in Dec.*]

QUADRANT COMICS

☐ **ELFWARRIOR #4.** Stormcrest battles Darkos' minion, Igros. By **Peter Heu**, back-up story by **Frank Reyes**. [*B & W comic; $1.95, ships in Dec.*]

☐ **ELFWARRIOR #5.** Derkos summons up the undead. By **Heu**. [*B & W comic; $1.95, ships in Dec.*]

☐ **QUADRANT #8.** The eight-part sword and sorcery sega, "Hellrazor" concludes in this issue. By **Tara Ballence & Peter Heu**. [*B & W comic, $1.95; ships in Dec.*]

3-D ZONE

☐ **3-D ZONE: SPACE VIXENS #18.** Includes "Princess Pam," "Aurore," "Point of View," and "Fair Play." By **Dave Stevens & Bruce Jones**; 3-D cover by **Stevens**. [*Color comic; $2.50, ships in Dec.*]

VIZ COMICS

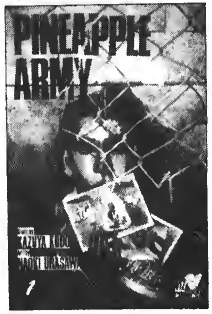
☐ **AREA 88 #37.** Kanzaki challenges Ryoko to prove his love for Shin. By **Kaoru Shintani**. [*B & W comic; $1.75, ships in Dec.*]

☐ **GREY: BOOK THREE.** Grey rushes to find Red and bring him back to Town 303. By **Yoshihise Tegemi**. [*B & W comic; $2.95; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **JUSTY #1-2.** Adventures of the super ESPer of Galactic Petrol. [*B & W comic; $1.75; ships in Dec.*]

☐ **NAUSICAA OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND: BOOK TWO.** By **Hayao Miyazaki**. [*B & W comic; $2.50, ships in Dec.*]

☐ **PINEAPPLE ARMY #1-2.** Adventures of Vietnam veteran Jed Goshi. By **Kazuya Kudo & Naoki Urasawa**; cover by **Darren Ching**. [*B & W comic; $1.75; ships in Dec.*]



VORTEX COMICS

☐ **BLACK KISS #7.** Violence and sex by **Howard Chaykin**. [*Color comic; $1.25, ships in Dec.*]

JADEMAN COMICS

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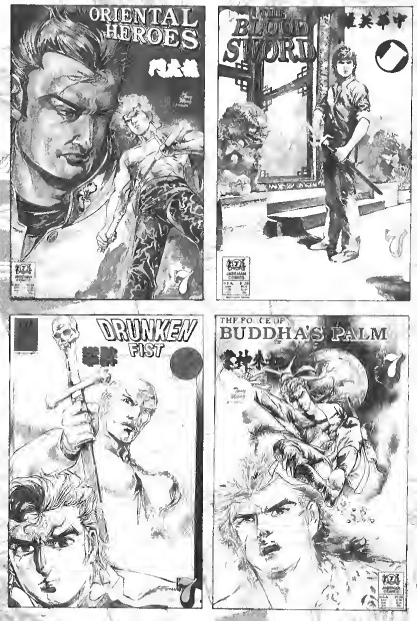

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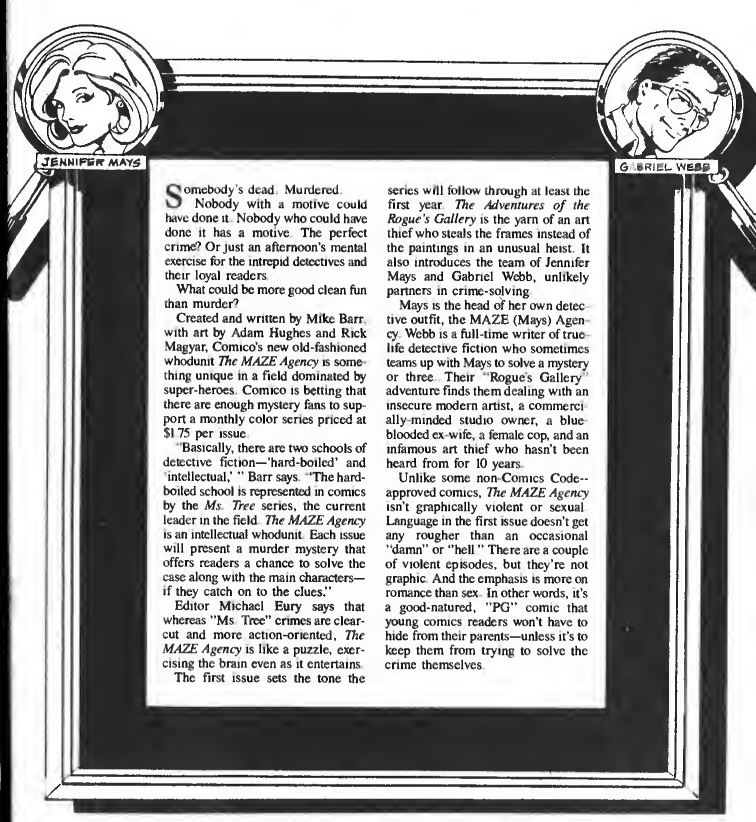
Scoping Out The MAZE Agency

Comico's New Whodunit

by Dennis Sellers



Somebody's dead. Murdered.

Nobody with a motive could have done it. Nobody who could have done it has a motive. The perfect crime? Or just an afternoon's mental exercise for the intrepid detectives and their loyal readers.

What could be more good clean fun than murder?

Created and written by Mike Barr, with art by Adam Hughes and Rick Magyar, Comico's new old-fashioned whodunit *The MAZE Agency* is something unique in a field dominated by super-heroes. Comico is betting that there are enough mystery fans to support a monthly color series priced at $1.75 per issue.

"Basically, there are two schools of detective fiction—'hard-boiled' and 'intellectual,'" Barr says. "The hard-boiled school is represented in comics by the *Ms. Tree* series, the current leader in the field. *The MAZE Agency* is an intellectual whodunit. Each issue will present a murder mystery that offers readers a chance to solve the case along with the main characters—if they catch on to the clues."

Editor Michael Eury says that whereas "Ms. Tree" crimes are clear-cut and more action-oriented, *The MAZE Agency* is like a puzzle, exercising the brain even as it entertains.

The first issue sets the tone the series will follow through at least the first year. *The Adventures of the Rogue's Gallery* is the yarn of an art thief who steals the frames instead of the paintings in an unusual heist. It also introduces the team of Jennifer Mays and Gabriel Webb, unlikely partners in crime-solving.

Mays is the head of her own detective outfit, the MAZE (Mays) Agency. Webb is a full-time writer of true-life detective fiction who sometimes teams up with Mays to solve a mystery or three. Their "Rogue's Gallery" adventure finds them dealing with an insecure modern artist, a commercially-minded studio owner, a blue-blooded ex-wife, a female cop, and an infamous art thief who hasn't been heard from for 10 years.

Unlike some non-Comics Code--approved comics, *The MAZE Agency* isn't graphically violent or sexual. Language in the first issue doesn't get any rougher than an occasional "damn" or "hell." There are a couple of violent episodes, but they're not graphic. And the emphasis is more on romance than sex. In other words, it's a good-natured, "PG" comic that young comics readers won't have to hide from their parents—unless it's to keep them from trying to solve the crime themselves.

The Odd Couple of Crime

Although the idea of a male-female detective team isn't new, Barr adds an '80s twist: the lady is the powerful business force, the man is more the creative, impulsive sort. Mays is attractive, prepared, and always in control. Webb is disorganized, dishevelled and plays things by ear. Mays would rather have the latest fashions from Paris. Webb, who would probably think "GQ" a type of Asian flu, goes into action in a hat, T-shirt, and jacket. Where style is concerned, these two are the Odd Couple of the detective world. And when it comes to solving cases, Mays is the more physical of the two, Webb the more abstract thinker.

At one point in "The Adventure of the Rogue's Gallery" an armed assailant opens fire on the intrepid duo. It's Mays who tells her partner to take cover while she snatches the gun from her purse. Turnabout is fair play however, and it's Webb who fits together the first piece of the mystery-solving puzzle. Although they wouldn't match up on *The Dating Game*, the first issue of *The MAZE Agency* hints at possible romance for the two unlikely partners. In fact, the tagline for the series is "a love story about detectives, a detective story about love."

The writer realizes that some people may see the shadow of Maddie Hayes and David Addison in Jennifer Mays and Gabe Webb, but he denies that the popular television series *Moonlighting* had any influence on the creation of the new comic.

"The concept of a male-female detective team goes back way before *Moonlighting*. It's a long-running tradition," ranging from *The Thin Man* motion pictures to such television series as *McMillan and Wife*, *Hart to Hart* and one of Barr's favorites, *Remington Steele*, he says.

"In fact, my first published fiction back in '73 was a whodunit about a female-male detective team," Barr says.

In addition to teasing hints of romance, Barr also hopes to tantalize readers with an air of mystery about the two main characters. For instance, Jennifer Mays owns a restaurant with the film noirish name of "Blue Ruby," which Gabe Webb refers to as "part of her mysterious past."

Also mentioned in passing is a man from Mays' past about which nothing is revealed except that our heroine had some emotional attachment to him. Furthermore, in the first issue of *The MAZE Agency* it's obvious that Mays and Webb have known each other, and worked together, for some time. The details of their first meeting is left for later development.

"I'll be fleshing out the details throughout the first year," Barr explains. "Although our two main characters have met before the first issue, they still know little about each other. It takes a long time to get to know someone and it will take a while for Jennifer and Gabe, as well as the readers, to learn the background details."

Although Mays and Webb will remain the focus of attention, Barr will be introducing other characters as time goes by. A supporting cast will help make the MAZE Agency more believable and realistic, he says.

The Plots Thicken

Initially in *The MAZE Agency*, Barr will buck the trend of long, drawn-out epics so prevalent in the comics scene today. Instead, he'll wrap up the main storyline in each 26-page issue, although certain subplots may unravel over several months.

"Throughout the first year or so, each mystery will be complete in one issue," Barr says. "As a reader as well as a writer of comics, I know I sometimes get disgusted with a story that goes on endlessly."

Barr already has full scripts worked out for the first seven issues. He is now plotting #7 even as Adam Hughes pencils issue #5. The storylines and titles for issues #1-7 are:

Adam Hughes's pencilled cover to *The MAZE Agency* #5, "Death Warmed Over."

No. 2 (January 1989): "Murder—the Lost Episodes," concerning the newly-discovered episodes of a 1950's TV comedy series. Barr said the idea came from the recently unearthed "lost episodes" of "The Honeymooners."

No. 3: "Case of the Vanishing Vehicle." An expensive sports car disappears. (The title is a tribute to the works of Erle Stanley Gardner, the creator of the *Perry Mason* courtroom series.)

No. 4: "The Return of Jack the Ripper?" November 1988 is the 100th anniversary of the last Jack the Ripper murder. Although this issue won't appear until four months later, Barr hopes to capitalize on the publicity of the event. Mays and Webb also get involved in the gruesome anniversary as members of the Jack the Ripper Club are dying of slit throats. Barr is extremely pleased with the story, calling it "one of the best I've ever written."

No. 5: "Death Warmed Over." Our detectives find their mysteries switching from a shadow of the past to a glimpse of the future. The problem: someone has tried to thaw out and destroy the body of a terminally ill man suspended in cryogenic sleep.

No. 6: "Double Edge." A very important development occurs in the relationship between the detective duo when a murder occurs at Webb's birthday party.

No. 7: "Hearts of Glass." Among other things, Barr promises a lot of information on Mays' past.

Murder, He Writes

Obviously the series' creator has spent many hours mapping out *The MAZE Agency*. What isn't so obvious is that the seeds for the adventures of Mays and Webb go back 21 years when Barr (now 36) was a high school sophomore.

"In the fall of '67 I became interested in detective fiction. That's when I ran across an Ellery Queen novel," Barr said. "Since then I've been reading all types of detective stories. Once I got into the comics field, I decided there should be a detective series in the comic book format. The field just doesn't have the diversity it had in the past.

"What I wanted to do is make up a package to copyright and trademark. I called Alan Davis, and artist I had worked with at DC, and approached him with the idea of doing a sample story. He liked the idea and did the artwork. Todd Klein lettered it and created the logo. I had copies printed up and sent them out to different publishers. Comico made the best offer and seemed to be a company that genuinely wanted to diversify the number of genres they do."

But things take time in the publishing business. By the time *The MAZE Agency* was placed on the Comico schedule, Davis was committed to other projects so a new artist had to be found. Barr began calling every artist he knew who might be interested, and Comico also put out the word that a penciller was being sought for a new detective comic.

At one point it seemed that the artist had been found. However, early artwork didn't capture the flavor of the series as Barr and Comico envisioned it, so the search was on again. Finally, a relative unknown, Adam Hughes, was selected. If Barr had any doubts about collaborating with a newcomer on a pet project, they're now gone.

"Adam is extremely talented and is getting better as he goes on," Barr said. "His first issue was very good, but I've seen his work for issue #4 and it makes #1 look like the work of an amateur."

Finding an inker for the series was a bit simpler. Rick Magyar learned of the project and called Barr to volunteer. The creative team on the book agrees that Magyar's inking perfectly complements Hughes' pencils.

Letterer Deborah Marks was Barr's personal choice for this job. Colorist Julia Lacquement was given the job because of her previous work on *Jon Sable*, which, while not a detective comic per se, has the same type of look and feel wanted for *The MAZE Agency*.

Rounding out the MAZE team is editor Michael Eury. Although they may not always see eye-to-eye on everything, Barr and Eury say they enjoy working with each other and credit any differences to "creative friction."

"Michael doesn't have a monumental ego or anything like that," Barr said. "He just wants what's best for the comic and, so far, we've had a pretty good time."

The creative team is expected to remain stable for the foreseeable future. Everyone involved gets first copy royalties, an extra incentive for hanging around and putting a best foot forward.

Of all those involved with *The MAZE Agency*, Barr is probably the best-known in the comics field. In the mid-'70s Barr was a frequent writer to the letter columns of the books edited by Julie Schwartz. On a trip to New York City, Barr, by now at least a recognizable name to Schwartz, managed to get an interview with the editor.

His persistence finally paid off when Barr sold a story in 1973. The story appeared in *Detective Comics* #444 and was pencilled by Ernie Chan (then known as Ernie Chua). His second pro effort was in *Detective Comics* #453.

During this time he was still living in Akron. In 1977 he took the plunge and moved to the comic book publishing capital, New York City. He took a non-writing staff level job at DC, figuring that any job in the comics field was better than other work elsewhere. There Barr worked as a proofreader.

"That was my technical title," he recalls. "I also did some miscellaneous photocopying for the editors. Basically, I was a jack-of-all-trades. Anything below the level of editor I got to do."

Writing was what he really wanted to do however, and after a year-and-a-half Barr resigned to give full-time freelancing a shot. He worked, but not as lucratively as he had hoped. So in 1979 he went back to DC as a staff editor. Editing four to six books a month he oversaw such titles as *Flash*, *Legion of Superheroes*, *The Unknown Soldier*, *World's Finest*, and various one-shots.

In 1981 Barr once again took up freelancing full time with great success. In the past seven years he has sold stories to First Comics and Marvel, but is primarily associated with DC and especially Batman. He has written more issues of *Detective Comics*, created and wrote *Batman and the Outsiders*, and collaborated with Jerry Bingham on the Batman graphic novel, *Son of the Demon*. He also wrote *Green Lantern* for a year.

It was also at DC that he wrote the futuristic limited series, *Camelot 3000*. Illustrated by Brian Bolland, Barr says it is his best work to date—although he hopes to surpass it with *The MAZE Agency*. *MAZE* is his first work for Comico. Even as he pens the detective adventures, he will still be writing for DC, taking over the scripting reins of the new *Doc Savage* with #7.

"Even though I think the comics field needs more variety, I'm still a fan of the super-hero genre and have definitely done my share of work in it," Barr says.

It was super-heroes that were on his must-read list as a youngster. The early Marvels by Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko were strong influences on him. He also avidly consumed the DC super-heroes and science fiction tales written by such legends as Gardner Fox and John Broome.

"Adam Strange was probably my first hero," said Barr. (Years later, he would get to pen a tale of "Earth's First Spaceman" when Strange teamed up with Batman in *The Brave and the Bold* #190.)

Jennifer & Gabe have radically differing attitudes about punctuality and fashion.

An Adam Hughes character sketch

Equally important influences on *The MAZE Agency* were the mystery writers whose work he loved: Ellery Queen (actually two writers, Manfred B. Lee and Frederic Danay), John Dickson Carr, Rex Stout, Margery Allingham and Raymond Chandler.

Barr himself is a published mystery writer, his first published fiction having been in the May 1973 *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* (set at a comics convention, no less) and in a Sept. 1977 Sunday supplement of his hometown newspaper, *The Akron Beacon Journal*.

"Of course, I have a whole closet full of rejected stories, but I hope to have some more published in the future," Barr said. "In fact, my contract with Comico allows me to use *The MAZE Agency* characters in prose stories."

As mentioned, the literary predecessors of those characters have appeared before, in some unpublished stories and in the *EQMM* and Beacon Journal tales. When developing the concept for *The MAZE Agency*, Barr renovated his earlier characters, Gardner Frost (named after Gardner Fox and Robert Frost, his favorite poet) and Karen Ashwin (named after one of his sisters—"at least that's what she says"—and a fictional detective character named Ashwin by author Anthony Boucher).

"I had written a lot of stories about the two characters over the years, but few had sold," Barr explained. "Once I sat down and began compiling notes for *The MAZE Agency* I made some changes. I chose the name 'Mays' because of the 'Maze' angle with its air of mystery. 'Jennifer' is similiar to 'Guenivere,' a character in the Arthurian legend. 'Webb' is a solid, one-syllable name with the connotation of hunting down something or unravelling something. And 'Gabe,' well, I've never actually met anyone named Gabe, although the name is well-known because of its use in the Bible. And Biblical names have symbolic connotations and therefore are almost invariably good for fictional characters."

Although pure mystery comics, minus super-heroes, are rare, Barr says *The MAZE Agency* wasn't as radical a departure from his past work as it might first appear. The characters he has most enjoyed reading and writing about in the past have brushed against the detective genre.

"I've always enjoyed Batman most when the action-adventure aspect of his character was combined with some kind of detective story, as well," Barr says. "As I've said, Adam Strange is one of my favorite heroes. He had all the usual trappings of a super-hero, but he was often referred to by fans as 'the thinking man's hero.' And that's what he was. Adam always had to use his wits to find his way out of whatever situation he was in at the time.

"I think that's also true of the characters in *The MAZE Agency*. They're characters who have to think things out and reason out from a mass of clues just what the truth is. All the characters I like very much have always been searching for the truth. That undercurrent in my work must mean something psychologically because it's always there."

The searchers for truth in *The MAZE Agency* are spotlighted in some of Barr's most detailed stories. There are two methods of writing comic books—"full script" and the "Marvel way." "Full script" means penning a story like a movie script, mapping out each scene in detail and describing the dialogue. The "Marvel way" is sending the penciller a plot synopsis, and working up the dialogue once the art is completed. Barr can work either way, but prefers to work full script because of the emphasis on visual clues.

Drawing Conclusions

According to the rest of the creative team, Adam Hughes is doing a good job of translating the detective story to visuals. At 21, he's the youngest member of a creative team made up mostly of people in their 30s. Hughes is also probably his own harshest critic.

"I've not been really happy with the quality of my work so far even though people tell me it's 'pretty good for a 21-year-old.' I abhorred the first issue of *The MAZE Agency*. Still, I think the second issue is such a leap ahead of the first," Hughes says. "I'm wrapping up number five now, and I think things really start hitting their stride in the fourth issue. I've gotten used to the deadline pressure a little more now, although I envy to no end people like Brian Bolland and Dave Stevens who are so in demand that publishers and fans are just sitting around waiting for their next work whenever it's done. Someday I'd like to be so good, so in demand, that I could take all the time I wanted on a project."

A New Jersey native, Hughes has his first regular comics series in *The MAZE Agency* following a few short pieces for Crystal Comics and Adventure Publishers. He first met Comico personnel at a comics convention in Philadelphia in 1987. Hughes actually credits his girlfriend for his big break. It was she who showed samples of his artwork to writer Chris Claremont, who referred her to the folks at Comico. They were impressed enough with the art samples she left them to keep in touch with Hughes over the next eight months. And when the search was on for an artist for a new detective series, he was given a shot—and won.

Since Alan Davis had already drawn the main characters in the six-page proposal he and Barr did, Hughes had the advantage of having a "pilot" from which to work on the first issue.

"When I got the characters, their look and feel had already been determined," he says. "Davis does really good work. He can put a lot of emotional impact into one panel."

Hughes considers himself extremely lucky to have gotten started in the field without having to "claw and struggle for years," as many others have.

Hughes is fresh enough in the medium (he prefers the phrase "comics medium" to "comics industry" because "I like the art side more than the business side") to still get excited about things more experienced professionals take for granted.

"All this is totally new ground for me," Hughes said. "Everything I've done lately—my first convention where I was a guest, my first interview (this one)—are things I have no past reference for. It's like a dream. You hear horror stories about how hard it can be to work with some people in the medium, but I've still not had a single bad experience with a writer or editor or anybody. Mike Barr's a wonderful fellow to work with and Michael Eury 'yells' at people better than anyone else I know. When he calls me up to 'yell' at me he never raises his voice. But he knows what to do to get a fire going under your belt."

Hughes says he has been interested in artwork ever since he "could draw a moustache on Superman." The first comic book he ever sat down and read was a coverless version of *Fantastic Four* #81, loaned to him by an older cousin. That got him addicted to comics. His artistry is self-taught, although he would like to take art courses as time and his budget will allow. His talent was honed and developed through imitating other artists he admired.

"It was George Perez and John Byrne that really got me started. When I was growing up I loved anything that Perez drew," he said. "Then it was John Byrne, around the time he was really beginning to pick up speed. I picked up a copy of *X-Men* #112 and found the guy incredible and tried to emulate him. For a long time I was a poor man's John Byrne. Now my all-time favorite artist is Steve Rude; I love his stuff.

"Nowadays I also really like Dave Stevens and the Hernandez Brothers. Those guys really opened my eyes to the fact that you have to be able to tell a story as well as draw nice-looking panels."

Hughes tries to enhance his artwork by adding little extra touches. For instance, in the first issue of *The MAZE Agency* a young guard on duty at an art museum is drinking coffee when he hears a disturbance. As he heads off to investigate the sound—and meet a violent fate—he sets the coffee cup down. As he heads into the shadows, Hughes offers a close-up of the cup, which reads, "World's Greatest Dad."

"I just thought that the emotional impact of him being shot would be heightened by the realization that he was a young father," Hughes said. "I've always liked it when someone who was telling a story would throw a little something extra in, something that the story wouldn't suffer from if it wasn't there, but that its presence helps a little."

Hughes is nothing if not a perfectionist. Even as others refer to him as a promising talent, he says his goal is to someday do a piece of artwork he "really likes an hour after he finishes it." Plus, he wants to contribute something of lasting importance to the medium.

"Once I said if I could just draw comics, I'd be happy. Well, now I'm doing it, but I've sort of raised my goals. I'm no prima donna; I know I'm here primarily to entertain people, but someday I'd like to produce work that someone could say was the best kind of work that the comics field produces. The kind of work that someone in, say, a hundred years would hold up as prime examples of the medium. I'd really like that."

The artist hopes to someday create a project that is totally unique to Adam Hughes, a comic that no one else could ever do as well as he.

"I'd really like to have a Project X about which someone would say, 'Oh yeah, that really only worked when Adam Hughes did it.' They had other people do fill-ins and other people work on it after he got run over by that bus, but no one did it as good as he did,'" Hughes says.

Although he has no idea what his "Project X" of the future might be, for now Hughes said he's exhilarated to be working in comics at all. While he admits to having his hands full doing a monthly book, there's nothing else he'd rather do.

"If the comics medium were to just fold one day, I'd be out on the streets selling pencils because drawing is all I can do," Hughes said. "And I hope a safe falls on me from six stories when I become complacent about my work."

Filling In the Details

If Hughes himself is ambivalent about his art, fellow artist Rick Magyar is more positive. Hughes' pencils are "solid" and the art team really starts to mesh after a few issues of adapting to each other's styles, he says.

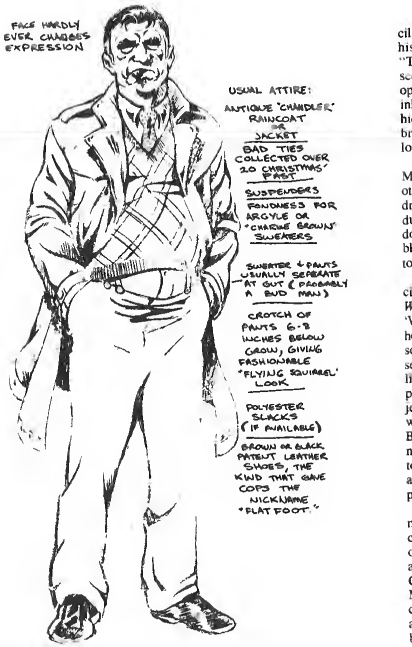
"It's a lot of fun to ink Adam's pencils. He's got it down, plus he's new, he's open-minded and he's open for growth," Magyar says. "He's someone who should definitely be watched from now on."

Whereas Hughes is the newcomer to the field, the New York-based Magyar is a seasoned professional who has been working in comics for the past seven years. Prior to breaking into comics he worked in educational filmstrips. One of his assignments was *Lollipop Dragon*, a strip for pre-schoolers through first grade, which taught truisms of life, such as the importance of accepting responsibility.

Magyar also did supermarket advertising around the same time. The most artistic challenge that involved, how-

Jennifer & Gabe on a case, from issue #2.

IT'S OBVIOUS NOW HE WAS KILLED ANY IDEA WITH WHAT, LIEU-TENANT?
"WE THINK SO, MISS MAYS."
I FOUND HIM. LOOT, BUT WE AIN'T TALKIN'.
WITH THIS IT LOOKS TO BE ONE OF THE PROPS USED IN THE SHOW. FILMED HERE. IT'S GOT NO PRINTS.
WE FOUND A KEY TO THE LOCK IN HIS POCKET. SO BUNCHES WAS IN IT UP TO HIS ASS-CRACK. I WISH WE HAD SOMETHING LIKE THAT. WE'D HAVE A BREAK IN THIS CASE!
I THINK MAYBE WE JUST DID, LIEUTENANT.
DID YOU REALLY THINK OUR KILLER WOULD BE SO OBLIGING?


FACE HARDLY EVER CHANGES EXPRESSION
USUAL ATTIRE:
ANTIQUE "CHANDLER" RAINCOAT
OR
JACKET
BAD TIES COLLECTED OVER 20 CHRISTMAS'S PAST
SUSPENDERS
FONDNESS FOR ARGYLE OR "CHARLIE BROWN" SWEATERS
SWEATER & PANTS USUALLY SEPARATE AT OUT (PROBABLY A BUD MAN)
CROTCH OF PANTS 6-8 INCHES BELOW GROIN, GIVING FASHIONABLE "FLYING SQUIRREL" LOOK
POLYESTER SLACKS (IF AVAILABLE)
BROWN OR BLACK PATENT LEATHER SHOES, THE KIND THAT GAVE COPS THE NICKNAME "FLAT FOOT."

Another preliminary character sketch.

ever, was drawing hamburgers, pot roast and pork chops, he says.

From that point he entered the comics field, starting at Marvel. Al Milgrom and Jim Shooter gave him his first break. Initially he did a lot of backgrounds for books that Milgrom edited or inked, such as *Rom*, *Space Knight*, and the original *She-Hulk* series near the end of its run. He also did backgrounds on much of the work inked by Joe Sinnott.

Magyar worked his way up to full inks, including a *Dr. Strange* issue over Dan Green's pencils of which he is especially proud. He also started doing some assignments for DC. His first work was on *Arak* with Ron Randall. He inked *Wonder Woman* with Don Heck and says he learned a lot from the longtime, often underappreciated penciller. Magyar also did stints on *Blue Devil* and *Omega Men*. The latter assignment was his first teaming with artist Todd Smith, later they went on to do a lengthy run on *Vigilante*. Magyar's most recent inking for DC was on *The Question*, which teamed him with penciller Denys Cowan. *The MAZE Agency* is his first Comico work.

Magyar first became interested in *MAZE* because he and Barr both hail from Akron, Ohio. They met in 1973, before either of them had broken into comics, and became friends. But after starting their professional work, they never had occasion to work together. Once Magyar learned of Barr's pet project, talked to the writer, and read a couple of the scripts, he phoned Barr to offer his services.

However, editor Michael Eury admits that at first he was hesitant to give the assignment to Magyar. Having been primarily accustomed to the inker's work over Denys Cowan's pencils on *The Question*, he didn't think Magyar's style would suit Hughes' pencils. Eury changed his mind when he saw the "audition" inks over some of Hughes' panels.

"A good inker embellishes a penciller's good qualities and tightens up his inconsistencies," Eury said. "That's what Magyar does. After seeing his work on Adam's stuff, my opinion of him has intensified. Some inkers just throw on a lot of ink and hide a penciller's work, but Magyar brings Adam's work to life. Nothing's lost in the translation."

Although comics is his livelihood, Magyar still "fools around" with other art. He does an occasional backdrop and playbill cover for theater productions in the Big Apple. He also does some advertising work and dabbles with logo design because he likes to play around with letter forms.

"Recently I've been doing full pencils and inks on some stories in DC's *Wasteland*, the first of which was 'Whistling Past the Graveyard' in #14," he says. "Hopefully, I'll be doing some full art on some upcoming miniseries for the company as well. I'd also like to try my hand at writing at some point in the future. I have some projects of my own in various stages which I intend to submit some time. But they're far enough in the future—next year, at least—that I'd prefer not to mention specifics now. Even with all that, I really like inking and I still plan to continue inking."

Magyar says he's been inspired by many artists over the years and choosing favorites is difficult. Some of the larger influences on his work are such "Golden Agers" as Milton Caniff, Will Eisner, Lou Fine, Joe Mimili (whose inking of his own pencils gave him several good pointers) and Alex Toth. Jim Holdaway, "the best artist on *Modesty Blaise*," does "fantastic backgrounds," he said. Current artists he admires are the Hernandez Brothers, Attilio Metilushi (an Italian artist whose work is just beginning to be imported to the U.S.A.), Brian Bolland and David Lloyd.

"I really like a lot of different tastes. I don't restrict myself to one style," Magyar stated. "I really like a lot of artists whose work is diametrically opposed to my own style. I try to be open-minded and allow myself to be influenced by different styles."

He considers himself about average when it comes to inking speed. He prefers to work slowly and admits to having problems facing the "dreaded deadline doom" up until the period he was inking *The Question*.

"Now if someone needs something done pretty fast I can do it, but I like to be able to do a job, let it sit a little while, then look over it and make changes," Magyar said. "I think my best work is the things I've spent the most time on. Like homemade soup, it's better if it's cooked awhile."

With a comics background mostly inking costumed heroes, it has taken some adjustment to the more subtle art of a mystery series. Magyar said that long stretches of super-hero work gets an artist into a different mode of thinking than that needed in a more realistic series.

"In the super-hero stuff, I think that you can maybe get away with a little more than you can in a mystery," he said. "While a mystery is still a fantasy, a fictional story, you have to be convincing in a different way. That's really more in Adam's area than mine in terms of communicating to the reader all the essentials involved in terms of revealing clues. Not only does the storytelling have to be unobtrusive and not distracting, but it has the added distraction of having to put clues in and making sure that the information is all conveyed to the reader in a very direct manner. The reader shouldn't have to search for clues all over the page. While they're not pointed out, they shouldn't be hidden either. I think that's one thing that Adam is very conscious of."

The final two components of *The MAZE Agency* team will be familiar with long time comics fans. Letterer Deborah Marks, who is also a colorist, has worked on *Mr. X* for Vortex Comics out of Canada. She is also the wife of Vortex publisher Bill Marks. Colorist Julia Lacquement is well-known as the colorist of *Green Arrow* and *Jon Sable*.

A Small Operation

Having worked for the largest comics companies and smaller publishers, Barr is glad that he brought his pet project to Comico. While there are distinct advantages to both, a smaller company was ideal for a personal project like *The MAZE Agency*.

"A smaller company can give a little more personal attention to their books. That's nothing against bigger companies, but with less books to publish and a smaller staff, a smaller company like Comico can give me a little more personal attention," Barr said. "Also, since *The MAZE Agency* is a creator-owned book, the attitude of the company is a little different than if it was work-for-hire in that I, as writer and creator, have a bigger say in editorial decisions. I also have some input on the marketing of the comic. I have the opportunity to look at promotional pieces, comment on them, and suggest appropriate changes. That's something I've never gotten to do before."

The advantage of a company the size of Marvel and DC is that more people are exposed to your work as the comics are distributed at newsstands and bookstores, an edge that smaller companies rarely have. However, Comico, who's comics are currently available only in comics specialty shops, is looking at methods or distributing their comics to a wider audience.

"Nothing concrete has been done, but we're working on bookstore distribution," Eury said. "If it works out, it would be a big plus, but even more important is changing the public perception that comic books are just kiddie stuff or disposable entertainment. I think *The MAZE Agency* would sell well in a bookstore if it were in the mystery section alongside something like Ellery Queen. If it's lost on a spin rack between *Heathcliff* and *The Avengers*, it probably won't do as well."

Eury continued that retailers must be educated to the fact that not all comics are the same, and that different titles should be geared to different audiences. Seeing all comics as basically the same leads to problems that the whole comic book industry should address, he feels.

"A lot of the comic book audience is older now, so a lot of comic books are geared to that audience. There's not as many comics aimed at the very young age group as there once was, yet the misconception that comics are just for kids persists," he said. "If the core of our audience is a slightly older audience, and we're not picking up lots of younger readers, we may be painting ourselves into a corner.

"Another thing that peeves me is people getting upset over comics that have violence, profanity or sex in them. If a parent catches his kid with his copy of *Debbie Does Dallas*, is he going to tell the kid that he can't ever see a movie again? Yet that's what sometimes happens with comics. People have to be educated that comics can appeal to a wide range of tastes."

That's why Eury calls *The MAZE Agency* an "adult" comic—a tag he applies with some hesitancy because of the connotations for some people—because of its content and intellectual level. Yet younger readers can appreciate it too, he adds.

"Both kids and adults can enjoy it. The challenge is to get it into the hands of those who will appreciate it," Eury said. "Until we got together a couple of years ago, my wife—who didn't read comics when she was growing up—couldn't understand why I still loved them. Then I showed her some good examples of what the field has to offer, now she looks forward to them. Hopefully, that will happen with *The MAZE Agency*."

The company is behind the book. The creative staff seems pleased with their work. Now the question is whether comics fans are willing to support a detective-mystery comic with no costumed super-beings.

"The readers will have to make the decision when they see the book," Barr said, "It's up to them." ●

The cover to issue #3, "Case of the Vanishing Vehicle"

BUCK ROGERS GALLERY

By STEVE RUDE—special to *AH*

The 25th Century in the 20th Century

Introduction by Robert Pollak

The *Buck Rogers* comic strip has influenced many contemporary sci-fi writers. It has also predicted many inventions that now exist. This classic comic strip has become very important as an influence in American comic art.

Fascinated with the *Buck Rogers* sci-fi theme, I've wandered into the 25th Century of the men who drew Buck. Over the last few years it wasn't enough to collect the old strips and artwork. I had to talk to or meet with these talented men. These gentlemen all followed the original creative team of writer Philip Nowlan and artist Dick Calkins, which was organized by John F. Dille. Some of these creative artists I've tracked down, such as Rick Yager, Leonard Dworkins, Murphy Anderson, George Tuska and Gray Morrow.

Rick Yager, who won't say how old he is, told me, "the happiest years of my life were drawing *Buck Rogers*." Rick drew Buck for 26 years and is responsible for the classic square profiled character who flew into many funny and imaginative adventures. People still are fascinated with his timely looking work. It reflects the vision of the future from the 1930's thru '50's. Rick Yager, who inherited Buck and drew him for over a quarter of a century, along with Zack Mosley (*Smilin' Jack*) and Russel Keaton (*Flyin' Jenny*) were the original

By GRAY MORROW—special to *AH*

creative assistants under Dick Calkins. Leonard Dworkins assisted on *Buck Rogers* for about 20 years starting in 1938. Leonard worked on lettering and art with Rick. He drew the *Buck Rogers* dailies after Murphy Anderson left in 1949, until 1951. He initialed them LD. After 1951 he continued working with Rick Yager on the strip, until they both left in the late '50s. Leonard then pursued a commercial art career.

Murphy Anderson is known for his graceful and rich inks. His work on *Planet Comics* was seen by John F. Dille, and that got him the daily *Buck* from '47 thru '49. He briefly shared a studio with Dan Barry of *Flash Gordon* fame. He later returned and took over the dailies and Sunday pages from mid '58 to mid '59. Anderson's *Buck Rogers* is considered one of the artistic heights of the strip. Murphy has built a respectable reputation for over four decades with fans. One reason is his powerful sci-fi/hero renderings for DC. The *Hawkman* comic of the '60's won him artistic praise from fans everywhere.

George Tuska continued the strip from mid '59 until it ended in 1967. He created a modern, updated look ing *Buck*. Mrs. Tuska said to me once that "George's best work was when he did his own inking." This is reflected in his work on *Buck Rogers*. George has drawn many super heroes for Marvel and DC comics over the years. In the late '70s he pencilled the *World's Greatest Heroes* newspaper strip. This featured the original Superman.

In 1979, for *Buck Rogers's* 50th birthday, Gray Morrow, with his realistic, illustrative style, was chosen to draw the strip. He enjoyed the creativity needed for the futuristic character. Gray said it was a lot of fun to work on, but he had to leave it for other projects, including the Sunday *Tarzan* strip! His work on other strip assignments, comic books and magazines have made him one of the finest artists in the business.

My thanks to all these very talented men for their work on this memorable strip. The comic sections of today's papers need the adventure, fantasy and imagination put back into them. It would be nice to see the strip return again and be put into capable hands. When will Buck be back and who will draw him next?

Murphy Anderson Talks About Buck Rogers!

Interview by Robert Pollak

Murphy Anderson has built a respectable reputation among fans and collectors over his four-decade career. One reason is his rich science fiction and super-hero renderings for DC Comics. These have included (just to mention a few) the Atomic Knights, Captain Comet, Hawkman, Spectre and John Carter of Mars. His earlier work on *Planet Comics* prepared him for the future. He was more than suited to render the most famous science fiction syndicated comic strip ever. *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century!* For a brief moment the 25th century sizzled with his art.

By MURPHY ANDERSON—special to *AH*

AMAZING HEROES: *You drew the* Buck Rogers *syndicated comic strip at two turning points in its run. First in 1947-1949, then again about 10 years later in 1958. How, when, where and why did you get involved on the strip the first time in 1947?*

MURPHY ANDERSON: Well, in 1947 I was living in Chicago and free-lancing for Fiction House and Ziff-Davis. I was always looking for something in the syndicated field. One day when I was scanning the want ads in the Chicago Tribune and I saw an ad that read something like, "Artist wanted to do adventure comic strip." I answered the ad and was amazed to find myself at the syndicate offices of *Buck Rogers!* They didn't immediately say what they wanted, which was a substitute for Dick Calkins. They indicated they were starting a new strip and were looking for a writer and artist. That's how I got involved the first go round.

AH: *Who wrote the dialogue for the strip and did you have any input in the story line then?*

ANDERSON: I had some input. I did discuss story with Mr. Dille and Bob Barton (Williams). Bob was hired because of his background in writing radio adventure stories. We discussed plot with Mr. Dille and he would make criticisms. This was in the beginning, before our first story got off the ground. He was trying to work it out so he felt I had the right approach to the art — at least to his satisfaction. He also had me do drawings that could be used for promotional pieces later on. Then we evolved the story from Mr. Dille and Bob Williams' ideas. I was involved some in plotting and story line.

AH: *Why did Wilma Deering vanish from the strip?*

ANDERSON: Mr. Dille felt Buck needed to have more girlfriends than just one, and also he liked the name Flame D'Amour, which is a good comic strip name. She would have been a good character for *Dick Tracy*. They were trying to keep Buck up to date in that sense. At that time Chester Gould had a lot of villains with unusual descriptive names like Flat Top, Prune Face and so on. Flame D'Amour was in that category. Also, he introduced a male character, the Flamingo Feather. I don't know where he came up with that name or why it intrigued him, but it had a flare and you would remember it.

AH: *Many people praised your art on* Buck Rogers, *but felt it was very "Flash Gordon-esque." Obviously your style was very different from Dick Calkins's work and Rick Yager's Sunday pages. Was there any problem because of the difference in artistic styles on the same strip?*

ANDERSON: I don't think so. The intent originally was to revamp the Sunday page also. Of course I was very slow and they may have had a change of heart. I don't know. From the beginning I was supposed to take over the Sunday page eventually. I guess the differences in art weren't that important with that in mind. Eventually it would be resolved into one artist doing both. It didn't happen at that point. It did in the sense that Rick Yager took over the dailies after I left.

AH: *Why did you leave the strip in the middle of a story in 1949?*

ANDERSON: It was a personality conflict you might say.

AH: *Was this the time you shared a studio with Dan Barry, who had been drawing the* Tarzan *daily strip?*

ANDERSON: Oh no, I got to know Dan after I returned to New York, later in the '50s. I got to know him through a friend from Chicago, who moved out to New York. He was working in comics and sharing a studio with Dan and Seymour Barry at the time. Dan was looking for a fourth person to share the load of the studio, so I came in paying a monthly rate just for the space. At that point in time, after I'd been there for a month or so, Dan was offered the *Flash Gordon* strip to do — so I was there when that happened.

AH: *What persuaded you to return to the* Buck Rogers *strip and take on the art chores for both the daily and Sunday pages in 1958?*

ANDERSON: The syndicate was in touch with me, or rather a friend of mine, Morrie Brickman. Morrie had lettered Buck for me the first go round, so we were more than professional acquaintances. We socialized some. We kept in touch and Morrie wanted me back on the strip, especially after Sputnik went up! Suddenly *Buck Rogers* became hot again, also because he had a salesman who didn't know it was hot and sold it to every paper he called on during a trip back from Texas when Sputnik was launched. The other salesman had told him you can't sell *Buck Rogers*.

AH: *They didn't want to sell it?*

ANDERSON: The syndicate wanted to sell it! But a salesman has very limited time and will pull out of his bag what he thinks has the best chance of selling. A strip like *Buck Rogers*, not officially, but among salesmen, was something they had to carry and didn't push it.

AH: *So, the new guy pushed it because it was the right time with Sputnik?*

ANDERSON: Yes, and the elder Mr. Dille was the only one who sold *Buck* other than through mail solicitations. During the time I was on the strip none of the salesmen sold it, to my knowledge. Mr. Dille had three or four salesmen at most times.

AH: *In the last panel of the last* Buck Rogers *Sunday page you drew (4/19/59), Buck says to Doc Huer "C'mon Doc, let's head for home! There's nothing more we can do here!" Was this an indication of your feelings on this final farewell?*

ANDERSON: I don't think so. It was just coincidence. It was typical of an ending of one adventure going into another. It would be nice to think that, but I had very little input into the writing.

AH: *You had more to say in the '40s?*

ANDERSON: Yes, that was a problem on the second go round. It was a stipulation that I would have input, but it didn't happen!

AH: *Let's look back at your work on* Buck Rogers, *and what if anything would you have changed?*

ANDERSON: That's a tough question! I feel I did my best work and tried very hard on it. I did the best I could at that point in time. As far as *Buck Rogers* is concerned, it has always been my favorite vehicle and I wanted to succeed with it! ●

RETURNING TO HEAD-QUARTERS...
BUCK, WHO IS HE? WHERE DID HE COME FROM?
PATIENCE, DR. POLARIS! YOU'LL SOON GET ALL THE ANSWERS YOU WANT!
7-26

A Murphy Anderson *Buck Rogers* daily strip from 1956.

A 1948 Anderson panel.

GUESS YOU SCARED MODAR SO BADLY, BUCK- HE COMMITTED SUICIDE!
NOT LIKELY, FEATHER- BUT IF NOT THAT, WHAT IS THE ANSWER?
ANDERSON 10-26
Reg. U. S. Pat. Off. © 1948 by John F. Dille Co.

The Almost Forgotten Buck Rogers!

George Tuska interviewed by Robert Pollak

I remember George Tuska's work on *Thunder Agents Comics* from when I was a young boy. In the '60s I was just starting to collect comics. The Saturday *New York Journal American* was carrying the *Buck Rogers* Sunday page he drew. His work always seemed modern and crisp. George has drawn many heroes over the years, from Superman to Iron Man; his work on *Buck Rogers* is overlooked by many and is possibly some of his best art. Being a collector of *Buck Rogers* strips and art, I admired his drawing, despite the updated stories that seemed out of place on the strip. He is highly regarded by his colleagues and has been involved in the comics industry since its "golden age," right through its "silver age," creating strong heroic images. From 1959 to 1967 the look of the future was designed by George Tuska on *Buck Rogers!*

AMAZING HEROES: *Now that* Buck Rogers *is almost 60 years old, I'd like to review your contributions to the strip. You took over the daily and Sunday page in '59, after Murphy Anderson left. How did you get into the picture at this point?*

GEORGE TUSKA: A group of artists, including myself, helped Murphy Anderson with the strip. Two months later I got a call from Chicago asking me to draw *Buck Rogers*. I accepted it.

AH: *Your* Buck *was different from the rest. "In the 25th Century" was dropped from the logo and new supporting characters were introduced, with the exception of Doctor Huer. Buck became a typical space policeman at this time with no continuity between the "new" look and the old strip. You must have been glad to draw this classic character, but it wasn't what it had been! How did you feel about being a part of this major overhaul?*

TUSKA: It was different . . . just Buck only! I was hoping the outcome would be good.

AH: *Did you have the opportunity to plot or write any of the stories?*

TUSKA: No. It would have been too much.

AH: *This strip gave you the chance to draw and ink your own work. This doesn't happen too often today. Would you consider your art on* Buck Rogers *one of the high points of your career?*

TUSKA: I do! Because of the time and effort I put into it. I felt it was a high point.

AH: *You drew the syndicated* Superman *comic strip in the late '70's also. That's another major character! How difficult is it drawing a Sunday and daily feature, as you did on both* Buck Rogers *and* Superman*?*

TUSKA: I enjoyed penciling *Superman*. With *Buck Rogers* it was longer hours and a lot of deadline worry.

AH: *Did you do art for any other syndicated comic strips during your career?*

TUSKA: I wrote, pencilled and inked *Scorchy Smith* for the Associated Press.

AH: *During your years in the comics industry, tell us what you would consider to be your favorite assignments.*

TUSKA: It was when I would be pencilling and writing plots.

AH: *Looking back at* Buck Rogers, *how would you have changed it, if you had the power to re-do the story or even your own art.*

TUSKA: I would still have kept Wilma and Doc Huer! Also I would have liked to have drawn more action.

AH: *You would have brought Wilma Deering back as Buck's regular sweetheart?*

TUSKA: I would have. You cannot separate two lovers after so many years.

AH: *Where did all the original art vanish to?*

TUSKA: The art went to Leisure Concepts of Chicago. They should still have them. I've written asking for the return of my originals, but no answer!

AH: *Let's catch up to the present! You have recently retired. Would you want to do any art for comics now?*

TUSKA: Yes I would. I miss it! ●

By GEORGE TUSKA—special to *AH*

By BILL WRAY—special to *AH*

By ROBERT POLLAK—special to *AH*

By MARK PACELLA—special to *AH*

Who's Who Update in the Who's Who Updates

The Official Guide to the Who's Who Artists

Compiled by Andy Mangels

Back in *AH* #109, I compiled the official listing of artists who had worked in DC's ambitious *Who's Who* series. The purposes of that checklist and this update are many. First, this will provide a complete list for art collectors. For instance, if you collect any comic with work by, say, Ty Templeton, you'll know which issues he had work in. Second, this will provide a handy reference guide for autograph-seekers at conventions.

Who's Who remains a much higher achievement as an index than does the *Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe*, for a variety of reasons. DC has yet to redo the entire *Who's Who* series; instead, they are using a yearly mini-series to update it. (Rumors are that next year will see the massive new *Who's Who*.)

DC has also gone to great lengths to find artists who are appropriate to the subject matter—in some cases the creator/artist has been used, while in others the artist who loves the character most has been used. Contrast this to Marvel's policy of using whatever artist is handy at the moment to turn in a hasty sketch, and of Marvel's using reprinted "action scenes" and in some cases, reprinted figure shots. Note that DC has fun sometimes with their entries (Proty's entries drawn by editor [and ex-*AH* editor] Mark Waid is an example), and does not print entries for dead characters (unless recently dead).

Finally, *Who's Who* is not inked by solely one inker, as the *Marvel Handbook* is. One inker, no matter how good he is, homogenizes everyone's pencils to some extent. Given Marvel's well-known "House Style," this was to be expected, but not welcomed. DC wisely avoided such homogenization.

ARGH!! YI,E!
CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? I WAS FORGOTTEN AGAIN!
JUST TEAR OUT THIS PAGE AND PASTE IT IN BETWEEN PAGES 30 AND 31 OF THE SECOND VOLUME OF WHO'S WHO...
AND THINGS A LOT OF THAT!

Keith Giffen & Bob Oksner's Argh! Yle! gets no respect from the *Who's Who* folk

Four *Who's Who* series have appeared since the original Artist Guide appeared: *Who's Who In Star Trek*, *Who's Who Update '87*, *Who's Who in the Legion*, and *Who's Who Update '88*. There have also been a few *Who's Who* pages scattered throughout other comics: *Doom Patrol* and *Ambush Bug*. Pay attention here to see exactly how to read the listings.

1. (p) means pencils only, (i) means inks only. An artist who both pencils and inks a figure receives no designation. A (pencils all) or (inks all) designation means that that artist pencilled or inked all entries listed.

2. Entries are in alphabetical order according to book. Book denotations will precede each book's entries (ST) denotes *Who's Who In Star Trek*, (L) is the *Legion*, and (87) and (88) denote the yearly updates. (AB) is *Son Of Ambush Bug* #2, while (DP) is *Doom Patrol* #1. (**) denotes supporting characters who were in the fourth issue of *Update '88*. (*) denotes an Appendix entry.

3. The last issue of *Who's Who in the Legion* contains head shots of 271 characters. The "artists" (some of them DC editors) involved are designated by "Cover to Volume Seven (3-p)," implying three head shots pencilled on the last *Legion* cover. This one was a real bitch to count, so enjoy it. And don't complain about the *Legion* entries not being in alphabetical order. They weren't in the series, so I've presented them in their series order.

4. The *Who's Who* name index volume by volume is as follows:

Who's Who In Star Trek
#1: Andorians to McCoy, Leonard H.
#2: McGivers, Marla to Vulcans

Who's Who Update '87
#1: All-Star Squadron to Catalyst
#2: Catwoman II to Goldstar
#3: Gray Man to Lionmane
#4: Lois Lane to Rampage
#5: Reaper to Zymyr and Appendix

Who's Who In The Legion
#1: Absorbancy Boy to Dr. Gym'll
#2: Dr. Mayavale to High Seer
#3: Heroes Of Lallor to Legion of Super-Rejects
#4: Legion Of Super-Villains to Mon-El
#5: Mordru to Science Police
#6: Sden to Timber Wolf
#7: Time Trapper to Zorax

Who's Who Update '88
#1: Amazing Man to Harlequin II
#2: IceMaiden to Nightwing
#3: Parliament Of Trees to Trident
#4: Ultra-Humanite to Zuggernaut and Supporting Characters and Appendix

Okay, so we all know that this index is one of those really fannish things that most of us are guilty of doing every now and then, so with that established, drop your pretentions and find out who's who in *Who's Who!*

ALCALA, ALFREDO: (88) Parliament of Trees (i).

ANDERSON, MURPHY: (ST) Organians. (87) Doll Girl, Kite Man (i).

ANDRU, ROSS: (87) Fay Gunn (p), Overthrow (p). (88) Steve Trevor** (p).

APARO, JIM: (87) Bad Samaritan, Duke of Oil, Outsiders, People's Heroes, Spectre, Strikeforce: Kobra. (88) KGBeast.

ARGONDEZZI, VINCE: (87) Dr. Midnight (p), Fury II (p), Infinity Inc. (88) Harlequin II (p), Sandman III.

ARTIS, TOM: (pencils all) (L) Teachers, Thein, Ultra Boy. (88) Dr. Mist, Felix Faust, IceMaiden, Zatanna.

AUGUSTYN, BRIAN: (L) Cover to Volume Seven (50-p). (88) Oberon** (p).

AUSTEN, CHUCK: (L) Legion Tour in Volume Five (p). (88) Midnight.

AUSTIN, TERRY: (ST) Harry Mudd (i). (87) Justice League (i). (DP) Doom Patrol (i).

BADGER, MARK: (88) Martian Manhunter.

BAIKIE, JIM: (87) Electric Warrior, Electric Warrior Weapons Check.

BAIR, MICHAEL: (ST) Christine Chapel (i), Deltans, Elasians (i), Miramanee, Natira. (87) Phantom of the Fair.

BAKER, KYLE: (L) Cosmic King, Mordru, Pulsar Stargrave, Shadow Lass, Tyroc. (88) Joker.

BARRAS, DELL: (ST) Sam Cogley (i), Excelsior (i), Ben Finney (i), Konom (i).

BARRETO, EDUARDO: (87) Cover to Volume #3, Church of Blood, The Hybrid. (88) Puppeteer, Toyman, Trident, Wildebeest, Lana Lang**, Perry White**.

BEACHUM, MARK: (87) Gray Man.

BEATTY, JOHN: (87) Rip Hunter (i), Windfall (i). (L) Heroes of Lallor Entries (i), Holdur, Immune. (88) Psi-Phon & Dreadnaught (p).

BEATTY, TERRY: (87) Wild Dog.

BENDER, HOWARD: (pencils all) (L) Roxxas, Sadaharu, Starburst Bandits, Starfinger I.

BOGDANOVE, JOHN: (87) Windfall (p).

BOLLAND, BRIAN: (87) Lady Blackhawk. (88) Animal Man*.

BOVE, STEVE: (ST) Ben Finney (p), Vina (87) Moonbow (p), Aquaman*, Bronze Tiger* (p), Halo*(p). (L) Lady Memory. Lamprey (p). (88) Parliament of Trees (p), Queen Bee (p).

BREEDING, BRETT: Ultra-Humanite (i), Rudolph & Mary West**(i).

BREYFOGLE, NORM: (88) Rat Catcher. Ventriloquist.

BRIGMAN, JUNE: (87) Protector (p).

BRODERICK, PAT: (87) Captain Atom, Dr. Spectro, Lords of the Ultra-Realm. (L) Blok. (88) Ghost (p), Wade Eiling**(p).

BROOKS, GREG: (ST) Gorns (i), Amanda Grayson (i), Lee Kelso (i), Klingons (i), Melkots (i), Tellarites (i). (87) Darwin Jones, Ian Karkull, Mikado (i).

BROWN, ELIOT: (88) JLI Embassy.

BROZOWSKI, JOE: (pencils all) (ST) Enterprise, Excelsior, Marla McGivers, Gary Mitchell, Tellarites. (87) Covers to Volumes #1 and 2, Brimstone, Parasite. (88) Firestorm, Soyuz, Stalnoivolk, Zuggernaut, Ed & Felicity Raymond**.

BRUNING, RICHARD: (87) Mr. 104 (p). (L) Cover to Volume Seven.

Kyle Baker's Joker

(19-i), Legion of Substitute Heroes Group (i), Sden (p), Seerons (p), Senset (p) (88) Gnort (i).

BULANADI, DANNY (ST) Starfleet (i), Starfleet Academy (i) (87) All-Star Squadron (i).

BURCHETT, RICK (88) Blackhawk (p), Blackhawks (p).

BUTLER, NATE (pencils all) (L) Nightwind, Omega, Oli-3 Queen, Organus, U.P. Ambassadors.

BYRNE, JOHN (ST) David Bailey, Hortas, Iotians, Khan, Harry Mudd (p), Sarek (87) Amazing Grace, Bizarro, Bloodsport, Host, Krypton & Kryptonite, Lex Luthor, Lois Lane, Magpie, Metallo, Rampage, Superboy (p), Titano (i). (88) Lori Lemaris, Mr Mxyzptlk (DP) Robotman.

CAMPANELLA, ROBERT: (inks all) (87) Mon-El, Zymyr, Bronze Tiger*, Halo*, (L) Cover to Volume Seven (50-i). Homeworlds in Volume Four, Calamity King, Captain Baktra, Captain Frake, Devil's Dozen, Dominators, Douglas Nolan, Fatal Five, Caress, Dark Man, Flare, Ferro Lad, Grimbor, Karate Kid II, Khunds Group, Legion of Substitute Heros II, Tyr, Zymyr, Leland McCauley, Lucifer 7, Luck Lords, Magnetic Kid I, Mon-El, Sensor Girl, Wanderers

Star Trek's Kahn by John Byrne

Group, Wanderers Entries. (88) Wanderers.

CARLIN, MIKE: (ST) Tribbles (p). (L) Cover to Volume Seven (19-p). (88) Sleez (p).

CAVALIERI, JOEY: (L) Psycho Warrior (p).

CHAYKIN, HOWARD: (ST) Covers to issues #1 and #2.

CLARK, MIKE: (ST) Andorians (p), Fabrini (p), Guardian of Forever (p), Melkots (p), Metrons (p).

COCKRUM, DAVE: (L) Chameleon Boy, Colossal Boy, Duo Damsel, Karate Kid I.

COLLINS, MIKE: (88) Danny Chase, Godiva.

COLON, ERNIE: (87) Flaw and Child.

COWAN, DENYS: (pencils all) (ST) Matt Decker, Elizabeth Dehner, Gem, Gorms, Amanda Grayson, David Marcus. (87) Mikado, Question.

CULLINS, PARIS: (87) Blue Beetle II, (p), Carapax (p), Catalyst (p). (L) Homeworlds in Volume Four (p).

DAVIS, ALAN: (87) Batman (p), Catwoman, Reaper.

DeCARLO, MIKE: (ST) Nancy Bryce (i), Richard Daystrom (i), Matt Decker (i), Gem (i), Thomas Kyle (i), Marla McGivers (i). (87) Atmos (i), Booster Gold (i), Caress (i), Chiller (i), Director (i), Flare (i), Legion of Substitute Heroes (i), Starfinger (i), Vanguard (i). (L) Cover to Volume Seven (30), Legion History Volume Two, pages 1, 5-7 (i), Atmos (i), Computo, Controllers, Starbright & Starlight (i), Storm Boy (i), Tellus (i), Time Trapper. (88) Mordru (p), Neptune Perkins (i).

DeLaROSA, SAM: (inks all) (88) Firestorm, Soyuz, Stalnoivolk, Zuggernaut, Ed & Felicity Raymond**.

DeSTEFANO, STEPHEN: (L) Porcupine Pete. (88) Gnort (p).

DORAN, COLLEEN: (ST) Gillian Taylor, (L) Cover to Volume Seven (75), Brainiac 5, Bounty, Dr. Regulus (i), Element Lad (i), Emerald Empress, Invisible Kid II, Infectious Lass, Spider Girl, Sun Emperor, Tarik, Science Police Group, Science Police Entries, Worldsmith, Xera, Yera. (88) Nightshade.

DUURSEMA, JAN: (ST) Bearclaw, Kevin Riley, Nyota Uhura. (87) Lady Shiva.

ERWIN, STEVE: (88) Black Thorn (p), Checkmate (p), Harvey Bullock**(p).

FARMER, MARK: (88) New Guardians (i).

FREFF: (ST) Arex (i), Enterprise (i).

FRENZ, RON: (ST) Richard Daystrom (p), Willard Decker (p), Edith Keeler (p), Mirror Universe (p), Chris Pike (p), Janice Rand (p). (87) Titano (p). (I) Dr. Regulus (p), Element Lad (p), Rond Vidar (p), Shrinking Violet (p).

Robin by Dick Giordano.

FUJITAKE, DENNIS: (88) Shade.

GAMMILL, KERRY: (87) Twister (p). (L) Star Boy (p), Wildfire (p).

GARCIA LOPEZ, JOSE LUIS: (88) Lex Luthor, Jenet Klyburn**, Jimmy Olsen**.

GIBBONS, DAVE: (87) Minutemen, Watchmen. (L) Dr. Mayavale, Dr Mantis Morlo, Dr. R'kalim, Mano.

GIFFEN, KEITH: (87) Amethyst (p). (L) Comet Queen (p), Darkseid (p), Validus (p), Planets of the 30th Century in Volume #3 (p), Legion of Substitute Heroes (p), Nemesis Kid (p), Saturn Queen (p), Omen (p), Phantom Girl (p), Prof. Vndaar (p), Prof. Vultan (p), Prophet (p), Servants of Darkness (p), Vibrex, Visi-Lad (p). (88) Dr. Fate (p), Green Flame (p), Wildfire (AB) Argh!-Yle (p).

GIORDANO, DICK: (ST) Willard Decker (i), John Farrell (i), Edith Keeler (i), Janice Rand (i), Tribbles (i). (87) Covers to Volume #1 and 2 (inks only), Dr. Moon (i), Fay Gunn (i), Moonbow (i), Robin. (L) Legion History Volume Two pages #2-4 (i). (88) Green Arrow (i), Shado (i), Tigress (i).

GORDON, AL: (inks all) (ST) Orions, Surak. (87) Artemis, Carcharo, Hazard, Icicle. (L) Chameleon Chief, Esper Lass, Hunter, Rainbow Girl, Reflecto, Resource Raiders. (88) Dr. Fate, Green Flame (i), Punch & Jewelee, Scott Fischer, Oberon**(i).

GREEN, DAN: (88) Weird.

GRINDBERG, TOM: (88) Alfred Pennyworth**, Terry Long**.

GUICE, JACKSON: Flash III (p), Kilgore (p). (88) Blue Trinity (p), Chunk (p).

GUSTOVICH, MIKE: (88) Crimson Avenger.

HANNIGAN, ED: (87) Vanguard (p). (88) Green Arrow (p), Shado (p).

HAZLEWOOD, DOUG: (88) Dr. Mist (i), Felix Faust (i).

HECK, DON: (87) Lionmane (i).

HOBERG, RICK: (88) Weaver.

HOOVER, DAVE: (L) Legion History Volume Two pages #8-13 (p), Wanderers Group (p), Wanderers Entries (p). (88) Wanderers (p).

HOWELL, RICHARD: (87) Darkwingg (p), Esak (p), Fastbak (p), Himon (p), Kanto (p), Kite-Man (p), Lionmane (p), Twister (i). (L) Legion Espionage Squad (p), Magnetic Kid II (p), Pharoxx, Plant Lad.

JANKE, DENNIS: (87) Brimstone (i), Fury II (i), Muse (i). (88) Ghost (i), Ma & Pa Kent**(p).

JANSON, KLAUS: (ST) Redjac (i).

JENSEN, DENNIS: (ST) Areel Shaw (i), Starbase (i), Vians (i).

JONES III, MALCOLM: (inks all) (87) All-Stars, Catalyst, Dyna-Mite, Flying Fox, Fury I, Iron Munro. (L) Persuader. (88) Amazing Man, Axis Amerika, Iron Munro, Per Degaton.

JURGENS, DAN: (pencils all) (ST) Cyrano Jones, Klingons. (87) Blackguard, Booster God, Chiller, Director, Goldstar, Minddancer, Rip Hunter, Shockwave. (L) Legin History Volume One pages 7-12, Calamity King, Captain Bakra, Captain Frake, Devil's Dozen, Fatal Five, Ferro Lad, Sun Boy.

KANE, GIL: (87) Blue Beetle I.

KESEL, BARBARA: (L) Sun-Eater (p).

KESEL, KARL: (ST) Andorians (i), Gary Mitchell (i). (87) Batgirl (i), Injustice Unlimited (i), Jihad (i), Mr 104 (i), Protector (i). (L) Cover to Volume #3 (i), Bacard Bailey Circus (i), Benn Pares (i), Blackout Boy (i), Blockade Boy (i), Dev-Em (i), Devil's Dozen, Dr. Zan Orbal (i), Magnetic Kid II (i), Proty I (i), Proty II (i), Psycho Warrior (i), Saturn Girl (i), Sun-Eater (i). (88) Newsboy Legion (DP) Negative Woman (i).

KING, MARTIN: (87) Muse (p). (L) Homeworlds in Volume Four (p).

LaROCQUE, GREG: (pencils all) (87) Atmos, Black Mace, Caress, Flare, Legion of Substitute Heroes, Starfinger. (L) Cover to issue #3 and #5, Legion History Volume Two pages 1, 5-7, Atmos, Dawnstar, Dominators, Douglas Nolan, Dream Girl, Caress, Dark Mam, Flare, Karate Kid II, Khunds Group, Legion of Substitute Heroes II, Lightning Lad, Lightning Lass, Quislet, Tellus, Universo. (88) Quislet, Red Trinity, Speed McGee, Rudolph & Mary West**.

LARSEN, ERIK: (88) Doom Patrol (p), Garguax (p), Karma, Lodestone (p), Negative Man, Scott Fischer (p), Shrapnel.

LEIALOHA, STEVE: (88) Manga Khan.

LEONARDI, RICK: (87) Batgirl (p).

LETTERIO, VINCE: (L) Quislet (i). (88) Red Trinity (i).

LEWIS, BOB: (87) Carapax (i), Rocket Red Brigade (i), Suicide Squad (i).

LIEFELD, ROB: (L) Dev-Em (p), Grimbor (p), Laurel Kent, Chameleon Chief (p), Esper Lass (p), Hunter (p), Rainbow Girl (p), Reflector (p), Resource Raiders (p). (88) Punch & Jewelee (p).

LIGHTLE, STEVE: (87) Kalki, Mentalla. (L) Covers to Volume #1 and #2, Legion History Volume One pages #1-6, Legion History Volume Two pages #2-4 (p).

LYLE, TOM: (88) Starman III (p).

MAGUIRE, KEVIN: (ST) Elasians (p), Carol Marcus (p), Saavik (p). (87) Justice League (p).

MAGYAR, RICK: (ST) Elizabeth Dehner (i). (87) Belle Reve (i), Queen Bee (i).

MAHLSTEDT, LARRY: (inks all) (87) Flash III. (L) Cover to Volume Five, Validus, Fenton Pike, Flynt Broj, Galactic Coordinator, Golden Boy, Guardians, Hagga, H'Hrnath, High Seer, League of Super-Assassins Entries, Nemesis Kid, Saturn Queen, Rond Vidar, Shrinking Violet. (88) Blue Trinity, Chunk.

MANDRAKE, TOM: (87) Black Adam, Captain Marvel, Sivana.

MANNA, LOU: (88) Iron Munro (p), Per Degaton (p), Tigress (p).

MARCOS, PABLO: (ST) Cyrano Jones (i), James T. Kirk (i), Spock (i), Hikaru Sulu (i). (87) Cover To Volume #5. (88) Blackhawk (i), Blackhawks (i).

MARTIN, CYNTHIA: (ST) Vulcans.

MARTIN, GARY: (88) Doom Patrol (i), Garguax (i).

MAZZUCCHELLI, DAVE: (87) Commissioner Gordon.

McDONNELL, LUKE: (87) Belle Reve (p), Jihad (p), Qurac (p), Suicide Squad (p), Vibe. (88) Duchess, Suicide Squad, Amanda Waller**.

McFARLANE, TODD: (ST) Orions (p), Surak (p), Triskelions. (87) Cover to Volume #4, Artemis (p),

Kyle McFarlane's cover to *Who's Who Update '87 vol. 4*

Nightwing is by George Perez, of course.

Carcharo (p), Chroma, Hazard (p), Icicle (p), Mr. Bones.

MIEHM, GRANT: (L) Cover to Volume Seven (23), Metropolis in Volume Six (p), Comet Queen (i), Cosmic Boy (i), Darkseid (i), Diamondeth (i), Dr. Gym'll (i), Izaya, Kandru Boltax, Kantuu, League of Super-Assassins Group, Mentalla (p), Mess (p), Modulus (p), Mojai Desai (p), Molecule Master (p), Zall Morgan (p), Zaryan (p), Zera Vultan (p), Zoraz (p). (88) Miss America.

MIGNOLA, MIKE: (L) Lightning Lord. (88) Silver Banshee (p).

MILGROM, AL: (87) Madmen (i).

MITCHELL, STEVE: (87) Parasite (i).

MOONEY, JIM: (L) Magno Lad, Micro Lad, Nightwind (i), Omega (i), Oli-3 Queen (i), Organus (i). (88) Prankster.

MOORE, JEROME: (87) Injustice Unlimited (p).

MORROW, GRAY: (ST) Leonard McCoy, Montgomery Scott. (88) Maxwell Lord**.

MORTIMER, WIN: (L) Marla Latham, Marte Allon, Taurus Gang, Tornado Twins, Tusker.

MURRAY, BRIAN: (87) Axis Amerika.

NEARY, PAUL: (87) Batman (i).

NICHOLS, ART: (ST) Carol Marcus (i), Number One (i).

OKSNER, BOB: (AB) Argh!Yle (i).

ORDWAY, JERRY: (88) Brainiac, Gangbuster, Psi-Phon & Dreadnaught (i), Sleez (i), Ma & Pa Kent**(i).

PACELLA, MARK: (ST) RedJac (p).

PATTERSON, BRUCE: (inks all) (ST) Mirror Universe. (87) Blue Beetle II. (L) Legion History Volume One pages #7-12, Legion History Volume Two pages 8-13.

PATTON, CHUCK: (87) Mon-El (p), Royal Flush Gang (p).

PENDERS, KEN: (pencils all) (ST) Arex, Christine Chapel, Sam Cogley, Lee Kelso, Thomas Kyle, Frank Leslie, M'Ress, Areel Shaw, Starbase, Starfleet, Starfleet Academy, Vians. (87) The Dome.

PEREZ, GEORGE: (ST) Apollo, Gary Seven. (87) Ares, Cheetah II, Decay, Demos & Phobos, Hipolyte, Olympian Gods, Paradise Island. (L) Cover to Volume Six (i), Absorbancy Boy (i), An Ryd (i), Animal Lad (i), Antenna Lad (i), Antonio Stefanacci (i), Arma Getten (i), Dawnstar (i), Dream Girl (i), Heroes of Lallor Group (i). (88) Nightwing, Silver Swan, Etta Candy**, Julia Kapatelis**.

PETERSON, JONATHAN: (pencils all) (ST) Phillip Boyce, John Farrell, Mark Piper. (87) Firefirst. (L) Crystal Kid, Dagon, Dark Circle, Devil's Dozen, Dr. Zan Orbal, Legion of Super-Rejects Group.

POTTS, CARL: (87) Madmen (p).

PURCELL, GORDON: (88) Little Boy Blue.

RANDALL, RON (ST) Ilia. (87) Y'Smalla.

RANKIN, RICH: (88) Dr. Occult (i), Harlequin II (i), Quislet (i), Skyhook (i).

REDDINGTON, JIM: (ST) Excalibans (p), Roger Korby (p). (L) League of Super-Assassins Entries (p).

RICE, DOUG: (88) Dumas, Manhunter.

RICHARDSON, ROY: (87) Royal Flush Gang (i).

RIDGWAY, JOHN: (87) John Constantine.

ROYER, MIKE: (87) Esak (i), Fastbak (i).

RUBINSTEIN, JOE: (ST) Maria Morelli (i), Saavik (i), Elizabeth Sherwood (i). (87) Frances Kane, Minddancer (i), Overthrow (i). (L) Quake Kid (i), Queeg (i), Queen Azura (i), Questar (i), Quicksand (i), Ulta Boy (i). (88) Sinestro (i), Zatanna (i).

RUSSELL, P. CRAIG: (88) Silver Banshee (i).

SACHS, BERNARD: (ST) Roger Korby (i).

SALMONS, TONY: (ST) Fabrini (i), Guardian of Forever (i).

SANDERS III, JIM: (inks all) (L)

The Green Lantern Corps by Joe Staton.

Legion Tour in Volume Five, Mentalla, Mess, Modulus, Mojai Desai, Molecule Master, Omen, Sun Boy, Teachers, Thein, U.P. Ambassadors, Warden Tsaquin, Weight Wizard. (88) Lodestone, Major Force.

SCHAFFENBERGER, KURT: (87) Superboy (i). (L) Nik Feelds Show in Volume Seven, Uli Algor (i), Unkillables (i).

SIMONSON, WALT: (ST) Romulans.

SIMPSON, HOWARD: (pencils all) (87) All-Stars, All-Star Squadron, Dyna-Mite, Flying Fox, Fury I, Iron Munro. (88) Amazing Man, Axis Amerika, Manhunters, Neptune Perkins.

SMITH, BOB: (inks all) (ST) Chris Pike. (87) Amethyst, The Dome, Firefist, Question. (L) Planets of the 30th Century in Volume #3, Lightning Lad, Lightning Lass, Phantom Girl, Servants of Darkness. (88) Starman, Wade Eding**(i).

SMITH, TOD: (87) Peacemaker.

SPIEGLE, DAN: (ST) Pavel Chekov. (88) Secret Six.

STARR, ARNIE: (ST) Starships. (87) Blackguard (i), Darkwing (i), Doctor Midnight (i), Goldstar (i), Qurac (i), Zymyr (p). (L) Metropolis in Volume Six (i), Nik Feelds Show in Volume Seven (i), Roxxas (i), Sadaharuu (i), Starburst Bandits (i), Starfinger I (i), Uli Algor (p), Unkillables (p), Universo (i). (88) Manhunters (i).

STASI, RICK: (pencils all) (87) Dr. Moon. (L) Diamondeth, Dr. Gym'll, Guardians, Hagga, H'Hrnath, High Seer, Tyr, Zymyr, Leland McCauley, Quake Kid, Queeg, Queen Azura, Questar, Quicksand. (88) Dr. Occult, Sinestro.

STATON, JOE: (87) Arisia, Baron Tyrano,, Ch'p, Dr. U'Bx, Green Lantern Corps, Guardians of the Universe, Katma Tui, Kilowog, Rocket Red Brigade (p), Salakk. (L) Bacard Barley Circus (p), Benn Pares (p), Blackout Boy (p), Blockade Boy (p). (88) Green Lantern, Green Lantern Corps, New Guardians, Thomas Kalmaku**. (DP) Doom Patrol (p), Celsius, Negative Woman (p), Tempest.

STEACY, KEN: (L) Starfinger II.

SUTTON, TOM: (ST) James T. Kirk (p), Konom (p), Spock (p), Hikaru Sulu (p).

SWAN, CURT: (pencils all) (ST) Maria Morelli, Elizabeth Sherwood. (L) Nik Feelds Show in Volume Seven, Absorbancy Boy, An Ryd, Animal Lad, Antenna Lad, Antonio Stefanacci, Arma Getten, Cosmic Boy, Persuader, Heroes of Lalor Entries, Holdur, Immune, Invisible Kid I, Mon-El, Saturn Girl, Sensor Girl, Superboy.

TANGHAL, ROMEO: (ST)

The Forever People by Ty Templeton.

M'Reiss (i), Mark Piper (i). (87) Black Mace (i).

TEMPLETON, TY: (87) Marine Marauder. (L) Cover to Volume Four and Seven (42), Bouncing Boy, Chemoids, Circadia Senius, Energax, Engineer, Eyeful Ethel, Infinite Man, Interplanetary Bank Beast-Guards, Invisible Kid I (i), Kid Psycho, Kol, Chlorophyl Kid, Color Kid, Double-Header, Fire Lad, Night Girl, Stone Boy, Legion of Super-Villains Group, Ol-Vir, Radiation Boy, Ron-Karr, Matter-Eater Lad, Polar Boy, Sden (i), Seeron (i), Sensei (i), Superboy (i). (88) Covers to Volumes #1-4, Forever People, Justice League International.

THEAKSTON, GREG: (ST) Phillip Boyce (i), Excalibans (i), Frank Leslie (i). (87) Himon (i), Kanto (i).

THIBERT, ART: (ST) Robert April, Nancy Bryce (p), United Federation of Planets. (87) New Atlantis (p). (L) Polecat, Power Boy, Prof. Huxton, R.J. Brande. (88) Nemesis, Wotan.

TIDWELL, TERRY: (i) Warden Tsaquin (p), Weight Wizard (p), Westerner (p).

TORRANCE, JACK: (87) Kilgore (i), Shockwave (i).

TRAVELLIN, FRANK: (L) Starbright & Starlight (p), Storm Boy (p).

TURNER, DWAYNE: (88) Atom (p), Skyhook (p), Strobe (p).

VALENTINO, JIM: (87) New Atlantis (i). (L) Cover to Volume Six (p), Chemical King (p), Charma (p), Command Kid (p), D'xandii (p), Dynamo Boy (p), Fenton Pike (p), Flynt Brojj (p), Galactic Coordinator (p), Golden Boy (p), Heroes of Lalor Group (p), Legion of Super-Rejects Entries (p), Lucifer 7 (p), Luck Lords (p), Magnetic Kid I (p).

VANCATA, BRAD: (88) Major Force (p), Ultra Humanite (p).

VEY, AL: (88) Black Thorn (i), Checkmate (i), Harvey Bullock**(i).

VILLARRUBIA, JOSE: (L) White Witch (p).

WAID, MARK: (i) Cover to Volume Seven (3-p), Proty I (p), Proty II (p).

WILLIAMS, KEITH: (ST) Metrons (i).

WILSHIRE, MARY: (87) Power Girl.

WILSON, KEITH: (L) Cover to Volume Seven (29-p, I-i), Chemical King (i), Charma (i), Command Kid (i), Crystal Kid (i), Dark Circle (i), D'xandii (i), Dynamo Boy (i), Energy Boy, Tharok, Gorax, Khunds Entries, Lamprey (i), Legion Espionage Squad (i), Legion of Super Rejects Group (i), Legion of Super-Rejects Entries (i), Magpie, Mandalla, Marella Tao Marko Chang, Prof. Vndaar (i), Prof. Vultan (i), Prophet (i), Star Boy (i), Visi-Lad (i), Westerner (i). Wildfire (i). (88) Atom (i), IceMaiden (i), Lords of Chaos & Order, Mrdru (i), Speed McGee (i), Strobe (i), Abby Cable**.

WOZNIAK, CHRIS: (ST) Number One (p). (L) Shadow Kid, Silver Sword, Size Lad, Sklarian Raiders. (88) Jim Corrigan**, Kim Liang**, Steve Trevor**(i).

WRAY, BILL: (ST) David Marcus (i), Talosians.

ZECK, MIKE: (L) Timber Wolf. ●

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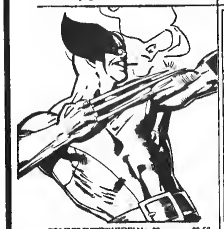

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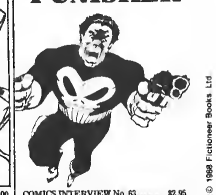

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VIDEO VIEWS

With A Little Help From My Readers

by Michael Eury

Before I reveal the results of the "Video Views" Reader's Poll initiated in *Amazing Heroes* #146, here's a quick scorecard of some of the comics-based film projects currently in production, movies to keep your eyes peeled for:

1) **The Batman:** Discussed at length in #152's column, Warner Brothers' *The Batman* (although the "The" may be eventually dropped from the title once its producers decide to make it campy) stars Michael (*Mr. Mom*) Keaton as Bruce Wayne/Batman, Jack (*The Witches of Eastwick*) Nicholson as the Joker, Sean (*Stripes*) Young as Vicki Vale, and Catherine (*SCTV*) O'Hara (one of my favorite comic actresses) in a minor role. Tim Burton, director of *Pee Wee's Big Adventure* and *Beetlejuice*, is at the helm of this picture, and Sam Hamm's much-heralded screenplay has been reworked to "make it more accessible to the public" by Charles (*Brazil*) McKeown. Currently shooting in England, *The Batman* is scheduled for a Summer '89 release (competing with *Back to the Future II*, *Indiana Jones III*, and *Star Trek V*).

2) **The Punisher:** Starring Dolph (*Rocky IV*, *Masters of the Universe*) Lundgren (sans blond hair) in the title role and co-starring Louis (*An Officer and a Gentleman*) Gosset, Jr., this $13 million movie promises to be *the* most literal screen translation of a comic-book character to date--after all, there's not much a film producer is required to do to the Punisher to make him "more accessible to the public." *The Punisher* is produced by Robert (*Taps*, *Karate Kid*) Kamen and is now filming in Australia.

3) **Sgt. Rock:** Lundgren's brother in beefcake, Arnold (*The Terminator*, *Conan the Barbarian*) Schwarzenegger, is bringing DC Comics' World War II hero to life in *Sgt. Rock*. This action flick is being produced by Joel Silver and John McTiernan, the same Hollywood duo responsible for one of this summer's biggest blockbusters and the *best* super-hero movie in years, *Die Hard* (and anyone who has seen *Die Hard* must agree that, despite the absence of outlandish powers and a tacky costume, it *is* a super-hero movie, one thoroughly recommended for edge-of-your-seat thrills). *Sgt. Rock* is the first WWII movie made in some time, but due to the success of *Platoon*-inspired Vietnam epics coupled with Schwarzenegger's box-office muscle, there's a fighting chance that this film will be a hit.

Schwarzenegger will play Sgt. Rock.

4) **Dick Tracy:** Now *here's* one that's been "in production" for over a decade! After being shuffled from director to director and studio to studio, it looks as if Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy* will finally make it to the movies. Touchstone (Disney) Pictures has picked up the property, and Warren Beatty is pegged to produce, direct, and quite probably star. (Since Beatty has lost his "superstar" status to a crop of younger actors, it's a safe bet that he *will* star, since the perennial popularity of Tracy should make this a media smash, thereby giving Beatty his first hit in years.) I'd like to see Christopher (*Who Framed Roger Rabbit*) Lloyd as Flattop.

5) **Judge Dredd:** This British-created comic-book enforcer will be kicking his way onto the screen during the summer of 1990. *Judge Dredd* is currently in its embryonic stages of production, so little is known about its story content. However, Tim Hunter has been selected by producers Charles Lippincott and Edward R. (*Conan the Barbarian*) Pressman to direct—and, judging from Hunter's work on last year's *River's Edge*, *Judge Dredd* is guaranteed to be violently twisted.

Other comics properties that are being developed into movies include *The Phantom*, *The Far Side*, a live-action *Archie* starring Corey Haim, *Spider-Man* (that on-again Cannon Films project), and *The Return of Swamp Thing*.

Now, the results of the "Video Views" Reader's Poll. For the uninitiated who missed this column in issue #146, I asked *Amazing Heroes* readers three questions:

I) Which TV or movie (live-action or animated) version of a comics character was the *best*?

2) Which was the *worst*? And...

3) Which comics character most deserves his or her own live-action movie?

I'm very pleased to note that the level of response to this poll was extremely healthy, so, in order to share the insightful comments of our participants with you, let's temporarily shift gears and segue into the time-honored format of a letter's column!

Dear Michael,

I have come to your call to all good fans to voice our opinions on the best and worst movie or TV adaptations of comic books, although I warn you that when dealing with this subject, I'm liable to gab incessantly. You see, both subjects—comic books and movies—are passions of mine, bordering on the perverse. And in light of such passion, for me to ponder what is the pinnacle of comic-book movies is akin to asking Hugh Hefner who his favorite woman is—we're both likely to try to find a way to waiver our opinions, so as not to hurt the feelings of any of our past flings.

Ah, but Chris, we're not talking about a harem of the mind, you might say; we're talking about particular circumstances when some of our favorite pen-and-ink characters have leap-frogged into another medium, and, more often than not, belly-flopped. In trying to narrow this down to one lonely choice, my mind reels with enjoyable flashes: the unexpected sexual overtones of *Flash Gordon* (the 1936 serial), the ingenious plotting and special effects of the *Adventures of Captain Marvel* serial, and the sheer, unadulterated fun of the *Green Hornet* TV series (okay, so that was based on a radio series—but it *was* a comic book for many years). Ah, c'mon, Mom—do I have to pick just one?

My choice for the finest adaptation is the Fleischer Studio's *Superman* cartoons from the 1940s. These cartoons represent the purest and most artistic example of replicating the comic book into film terms. The animators simply took the experience of sequential art to its logical next step: movement. The live-action Superman of late is more three-dimensional than this original cartoon version, but the Fleischer *Superman* series fluidly depicted the character in all of his early Siegel-and-Shuster glory. The animators' use of mood and shadow—obviously influenced by German films—was masterful. No other movie or TV series came closer to that thing called "art" than this one.

The worst? This category is sadly easy. I'm sure that most fans would cite *Howard the Duck* here, though I feel George Lucas's dunder-headed fantasy had its isolated moments of mirth (*very* isolated). My choice, however, is the TV movie *Captain America II*. Why? Well, what can be worse than a movie sequel but a *TV movie* sequel? In sitting (and writhing) through this movie, it's obvious that CBS was trying to launch their own *Six Million Dollar Man*-type series, complete with the same metal-churning sound effects used whenever our hero performed some "amazing" feats. As played by hunk Reb Brown, Cap was transformed into a California beach bum, who, when trouble appeared, jumped into his Custom van, and presto! Out came—Evil Knievel?! No, it's the Captain, all right. Steve, we hardly knew ya.

Chris Hoskins
West Hempsted, NY

Dear Michael:

In response to your poll:

#1: A tie between the Fleischer *Superman* cartoons and the first seasons of *The Adventures of Superman* and *Wonder Woman*.

#2: Oh, *that's* loaded! I'd probably go for, in animation, the *Fantastic Four* (DePatie-Freleng version) and, in live action, the *Spider-Man* TV series.

#3: *Nexus*, with Steve Rude as the Nex, of course!

Darrell McNeil
Studio City, CA

—I doubt that the Dude will have time to play Nexus, Darrell, since he's not a member of SAG! Darrell McNeil, incidentally, is the author of the "Animation News" column in the Comics Buyer's Guide, *and is also teaming up with the aforementioned Steve Rude on Comico's next* Space Ghost *Special, tentatively scheduled for a 1990 release.—ME*

Dear Michael,

I am 14 years old and have seen many screen versions of comics, some of which have been good, while others have just been terrible. I would like to share with you my ideas and answer the questions asked in your poll. I hope that my responses will be useful (and printed).

1) The best version of a comics character on TV or in a movie is the portrayal of Superman in the wonderful movie from 1978. Christopher Reeve did a brilliant job in making you believe that he was the Last Son of Krypton. The movie was so well done that I believed Superman could fly! Mario Puzo showed us that he could stay faithful to the comics version. The cast was well-chosen and magnificent. All of these factors made this Alexander and Ilya Salkind production the greatest adaptation of a comics character ever.

The Fleischer's *Superman*.

2) The absolute worst version of a comics character ever is the idiotic portrayal of Wonder Woman in the terrible 1974 TV movie, which featured Cathy Lee Crosby and Ricardo Montalban (oh, brother!). This movie was badly written, and the acting was worse. Charles Moulton must have turned over in his grave when *Wonder Woman* premiered. This was not the real Wonder Woman—it was a corny flick using the name only. This movie was so stupid that it has probably been forgotten by most people.

3) Which comics character most deserves his or her own live-action movie? It is not just *one* character that deserves this honor; it is a group. This group has been around as long as Marvel Comics has. Of course, I am talking about the world's greatest team, the original *Fantastic Four*! They have had two great animated TV shows (not to mention the Thing's show), and now they deserve a movie. I'm sure that it would be very successful. I would now like to suggest the cast:

Human Torch: Anthony Michael Hall
Invisible Girl: Daryl Hannah
Mister Fantastic: Kevin Costner
Thing: Mike Tyson with Tommy Lee Jones's voice
Ben Grimm: Tommy Lee Jones
Doctor Doom: Max Von Sydow

I hope you enjoy my selections. It was a pleasure answering these questions. I truly hope that someday this movie will hit the big screen.

Thank you,
Javier Corripio
Yonkers, NY

—Superman: The Movie producers Ilya and Alexander Salkind are behind the new Superboy *TV series, which recently debuted in syndication. Un-*

Howard the Duck: not good.

fortunately, Javier, Cathy Lee Crosby's Wonder Woman *was so bad that it's hard to forget. It truly warrants a berth on TV's* That's Incredible *as a "miracle of wretched filmmaking." And I love your cast for the* FF *flick, although I'd opt for an older actor to play Reed Richards, perhaps Paul Newman.—ME*

Dear Mr. Eury,

I'm responding to your request in *Amazing Heroes* #146 about the best/worst super-hero incarnations on the big screen/boob tube. I've done occasional articles for AH and I operate a video store specializing in animation and cult videos, so maybe I can cover a little more history than the average Marvelite.

I can't really come out and say which version was the absolute best, but I *can* say which interpretations of certain characters were superior to other attempts.

Captain Marvel: Probably the best version of the Big Red Cheese was the 1941 Republic serial titled *The Adventures of Captain Marvel*. Although Cap looked like Zeppo Marx in tight longjohns, he *really* got into bashing the baddies, even to the point of throwing some poor bastard off the top of a building! The whimsical sense of humor found in the comics is totally absent here, but it doesn't seem to hurt the impact of the character.

The worst version of Captain Marvel had to be the mid-70s live-action Saturday morning show, *Shazam*, that had Billy Batson and his mentor, "Mentor," driving through the U.S. in a van. The Big Red Cheese was constantly teaching some jerky kid to "be yourself" and "the only thing you have to fear is fear itself." *Gag!*

Superman: The best movies have to be *Superman: The Movie* and its immediate sequels. After that, Kirk Alyn's *Superman: The Serial* is equally enjoyable. I'm rather lukewarm on George Reeves. The Fleischer *Superman* series of the '40s remain the only Superman cartoons worth watching.

Captain America: the old serial has the 1970s retread beat hands down! How anyone could take such a surefire idea as Captain America and then toss it out the window in favor of some guy on a motorcycle is beyond my comprehension.

The Incredible Hulk: The *best* Hulk, oddly enough, was a one-shot comedy skit by the old Not Ready for Prime Time Players on *Saturday Night Live*. The late John Belushi played the Hulk at a cocktail party hosted by Superman (Bill Murray) and Lois Lane (Margot Kidder). The Invisible Girl, Flash (Dan Aykroyd), Spider-Man, Spider-Woman, and the Thing also put in appearances. Frankly, I consider Lou Ferrigno's Hulk pretty pathetic.

Doctor Strange: This late-'70s TV movie might not have had Dormammu in it or Steve Ditko sets, and Doc is portrayed as being too young and far too blow-dried for my tastes, but *Doctor Strange* had its heart in the right place. Considering the film's budget, the bad guy they came up with was pretty good.

The Riddler: Frank Gorshin's Riddler has to be one of the all-time great psychotic acting roles, but what I find irritating is why the *Batman* TV series's execs didn't cast him as the Joker, since that's obviously who he modeled his character after.

JLA: Yes, the ol' Justice League. The *Super Friends* garbage was exactly that. (Why the hell didn't they call the show *Justice League*? The heroes are actually called the "JLA" half the time in the scripts).

However, the *Super Powers* show of a few years back was pretty neat. I was surprised to see Darkseid, of all baddies, as the main villain.

There was also a live-action JLA special back in the late '70s that was a weird cross between the old *Batman* TV show and *Laugh-In*. It had some really superb costumes, though (the ones that stick in my mind are Hawkman and Green Lantern), and the casting for the villains was pretty inspired. Charlie Callas played Sinestro, and I'll be damned if he didn't look *just* like him! It was creepy!

Tom Tyler from the 1941 serial *The Adventures of Captain Marvel*. Good. Chris Reeve from *Superman III*. Not.

Lynda Carter's *Wonder Woman*. Good. Cathy Lee Crosby's. Not.

Spider-Man: Let me go ahead and say that *any* live-action version of the Web-Slinger is gonna suck, no matter who's doing it. The worst was the late-seventies live-action TV show, where our hero resembled (and here I quote a good friend of mine who is a devoted Spidey fan) "some jerk in spandex PJs with painful rectal itch." The *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends* cartoon of a few years back was actually pretty entertaining, simply because it managed to catch the flavor of the early Lee/Ditko period in terms of character interaction.

Batman: I've never seen the old *Batman* serials, so I can't vouch for them, but they're *bound* to be better than the TV series. I'll admit that I loved the show when it first came on, but, hey—I was only eight years old at the time!

The Spirit: The live-action TV movie that aired last year wasn't too bad, but it suffered from a bad case of *Batman*-itis.

As for casting a movie with my fave comics characters . . . hmmm. *Dark Knight* springs readily to mind. I'd probably cast Burt Lancaster as the older Batman/Bruce Wayne. David Bowie would get the nod as the Joker (although Jack Nicholson isn't a bad second choice), Molly Ringwald would be Robin III (I realize she's "too mature" for the part, but, hey!), Christopher Reeve would be Superman (naturally), Dennis Hopper would be Green Arrow, Hal Lyndon of *Barney Miller* fame would be Commissioner Gordon, and Pee Wee Herman would be the Joker's psychiatrist.

Casting *The Watchmen* is pretty difficult, but here goes—Comedian (young): Sean Penn, Emilio Estevez, or maybe Randy Quaid. Comedian (old): Jack Nicholson or Clint Eastwood; Silk Spectre II: Jane Fonda or Kathleen Turner; Dr. Manhattan: I strongly suggest he be portrayed by a strange hybridization of man and computer animation, like Max Headroom, with William Hurt's voice; Rorschach: John Hurt; Ozymandias: Robert Redford—hell, the part was written for him!; Moloch: the guy who played the nasty heavy in *Robocop*.

Skoal!

Nancy A. Collins

New Orleans, LA

—Nancy, I, too, remember the SNL *sketch you mentioned with fondness, particularly Superman and the Flash's rapid-fire ping pong game, Garrett Morris as Ant-Man ("I is Ant-Man! I has the powas of a' ant!"), and Belushi's Hulk stinking up the toilet. CBS-TV's* Doctor Strange *movie, which I'll probably cover in these pages some day, is now available on MCA Home Video for $39.95. And don't give Adam West's* Batman *such a hard time! Check out my "Video Views" in* Amazing Heroes *#152 for my plea in West's defense.—ME*

Michael Eury

In regards to your *Amazing Heroes* "Video Views" Reader's poll:

1) Personally, I was entertained by the movies *Superman* and *Superman II*, so I choose them as the comic-book character best adapted to video.

2) The worst? *Superman III* and *IV* were bad, but I'd have to say that the *Batman* TV show from the '60s sickens me more.

3) The question of "which comics character most deserves his/her own live-action movie" is the one I wanted to respond to the most, and accordingly, I gave it the most thought. My humble opinion is to give the nod to *Somerset Holmes* of Pacific/Eclipse fame. Of course, the movie would *have* to star Sharon Gless of *Cagney and Lacey* fame. Some time ago (two years?), I heard that *Somerset* had been optioned for a movie, but have never heard anything else about it since. Can anybody tell me what's going on? And I remember reading that Eclipse was planning a *Return of Somerset Holmes* series, but haven't heard anything about that recently, either.

Thank you,

Peter Iorillo

Cleveland Heights, OH

—If anyone reading this knows of any info concerning the future of Somerset Holmes, *comics and film, please drop me a line at "Video Views" in care of* Amazing Heroes, *and I'll pass it on to the readers here.—ME*

Michael,

Concerning your request for opinions for the best and worst adaptations of comic-book characters to screen, I sat back in my favorite easy chair for some quiet reflection. Calling forth memories, I found that very few filmmakers have actually accomplished the transition successfully. Most of their efforts fell far short of the expectations of fandom.

There *have* been exceptions, however. One of the first, and to this day the finest, was the trilogy of *Flash Gordon* serials in the late '30s and early '40s. These classics captured Alex Raymond's warrior world of Mongo to visual perfection. Granted, the special effects were rough and at times laughable when compared to the industry standards of today, but when I was first exposed to those alien landscapes during my youth, I was totally amazed at how some of my favorite characters were actually brought to life with such startling vitality. Buster Crabbe as Flash, Charles Middleton as Ming the Merciless, and Frank Shannon as the slightly off-the-wall Dr. Zarkov fit their roles to perfection. The physical resemblance to their drawn counterparts was uncanny, and all involved with these serials attacked their respective roles with vitality and sincerity. I still enjoy viewing these

films for nostalgic reasons, and admit to experiencing a personal thrill when sharing them with my children.

During the 1960s, the Hanna-Barbera studios held the monopoly on the after-dinner TV-animation hour, until the latter-half of the decade, that is, when the *Marvel Super-Heoes* began appearing in their own shows. The animation here was far different from the usual cartoon fare, taking original art by the likes of King Kirby and company and placing them in flowing action sequences. It was a bold and innovative move, a bit before its time. The shows didn't last too long, although they have experienced a revival recently on a noon-time cartoon anthology show here in Chicago, where they're capably enthralling another generation of Marvel fans.

Yet the '60s are memorable for another short-lived comics-inspired television show: *The Green Hornet*. Van Williams and Bruce Lee brought the Hornet and Kato to life in an extremely effective manner. And talk abut a theme song—Al Hirt's "Hornet's Theme" *[a souped- up version of "Flight of the Bumblee."—ME]* sticks with me to this day. This product was superior to the *Batman* TV show, but it stayed on the air for far too short a time. I also can't reason why this show has never resurfaced in reruns. Given the popularity of Bruce Lee, *The Green Hornet* has the makings of a cult classic.

More recently, I've discovered (through videocassettes) a series of movies adapting *Lone Wolf and Cub*. These films are some of the finest film adaptations from the comics medium to date. The special effects are outstanding, and the stories are presented almost word-for-word from the comic books. The actors appear to have literally stepped from the comics pages—the resemblance is uncanny! This series is proof that when a comics adaptation is given a fair chance by people who truly care about it, it can succeed.

Mike Sodin,
Chicago, IL

—Sorry I had to trim your lengthy, thought-provoking letter down a tad, Mike. I'm not in agreement with your assessment of the Marvel Super-Heroes *cartoons, as you will read a little later in this column. The reason you don't see* The Green Hornet *in reruns today is because there aren't enough episodes available for perpetual daily syndication. And yours is the first mention I've heard of* Lone Wolf and Cub *movies, which is not surprising, since I'm not a fan of that material. However, if you or any other reader would like to write in and provide me with information about obtaining those videos, I'd be glad to share that news here.—ME*

Michael,

In my humble opinion, the *Wonder Woman* TV series with Lynda Carter (first season) was the best screen version of a comics character. The *Wonder Woman* TV movie starring Cathy Lee Crosby was the worst, with those god-awful *Captain America* TV movies running a close second.

I would like to see a live-action *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers* movie. It could be a '60s-type nostalgic thing. Don't ask me to think up a cast.

Laney Loftin
Monroe, LA

—Hey, I expected every other person who responded to this poll to request a Wolverine *mavie, so your suggestion caught me by surprise, Laney. A cast for a* Freak Brothers *mavie? How about Harold Ramis as Phineas, Randy Quaid as Fat Freddy, and Howard Hessman as Freewheelin' Frank, with Garfield (on diet pills) as Fat Freddy's cat.—ME*

Gentlemen:

Enclosed are my comments regarding your "Video Views" Poll:

1) First place would go to the original twenty episodes of Grantray and Lawrence's animated *The Amazing Spider-Man*. Runner-up would be the live-action *Adventures of Superman*.

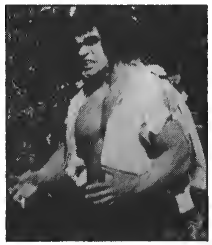
2) The worst TV live-action version of a comics character was *The Incredible Hulk*.

3) The character of Spider-Man most deserves to have a live-action movie. Spider-Man should be played by Ralph Macchio.

Respectfully,
David F. Gonzalez
Marietta, GA

Finally, my Comico boss and buddy Bob Schreck votes for the Fleischer *Superman* cartoons as the best, with the Usland/Craven *Swamp Thing*

Lou Ferrigno as *The Incredible Hulk*.



movie tied with TV's live-action *Spider-Man* ("with reflecto-eyes," says Bob) as the worst. Bob also voices an interest in seeing Sigourney Weaver play Christine Spar in a *Grendel* film, and jokes that Michael Keaton would make a great Galactus. Only if he could appear with Sam Kinnison as the Silver Surfer, Bob!

Let's top off this edition of "Video Views" with my choices for the questions posed in this poll:

1) The best? Inarguably, the 17 *Superman* cartoons by Fleischer Studios (and, judging from the letters appearing herein, this seems to be the general consensus). Never before have the essence and excitement of a superhero been captured so well on film. This *Superman* series is a tough example for today's animators and filmmakers to live up to—but it should certainly serve as an aspiration.

2) The worst? Yeah, that *is* a difficult proposition, with the comics-inspired dreck that's slimed across the screen over the years. Since I'm forced to make a choice, however, I must single out the abysmal *Marvel Super-Heroes* syndicated cartoons of the mid-'60s (sorry, Mike Sodin!). These schlock entries, individual series starring *Thor*, *Captain America*, *Hulk*, *Sub-Mariner*, and *Iron Man*, were haphazardly produced on a shoestring budget of tens of dollars, merely lifting Jack Kirby art from the comics and "animating" it primarily through camera movements. These cartoons, memorable only for their goofy theme songs, are laughable, a blatantly obvious attempt for someone to cash in on the Marvel Renaissance. (In fact, rarely has the TV screen done justice to a Marvel super-hero, which is the topic of an upcoming "Video Views" column.)

3) My "dream flick?" As much as I'd love to see Mel Gibson as the Badger or a live-action *Eddy Current* movie, *the* live-action film I'd like to see is based upon a TV character who's often been translated to comics: *Gumby*. With the success of mixing live action and animation in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, just imagine a merger between live action and *claymation* in a full-length *Gumby* motion picture, handled along the lines of Comico's wacky *Gumby's Summer Fun* and *Winter Fun Specials*. With a hip director overseeing the project, a *Gumby* movie could be a smash hit. On second thought, though, I'm sure some greedy Hollywood mogul would decide to avoid the claymation and put Eddie "I'm Gumby, dammit!" Murphy in a green clay suit again for the lead. *Sigh!*

Thanks to everyone who responded to this poll. See you next month! ●

DOC'S BOOKSHELF

When America Went Batty: Part I

by Dwight R. Decker

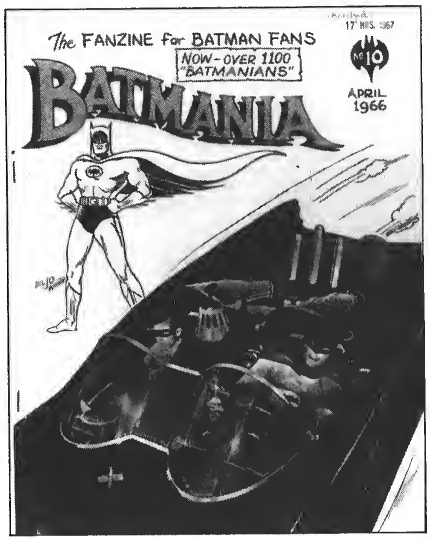
Black Wednesday... January 12, 1966. I remember it well.

I was 13 then, just two weeks shy of turning 14, and a freshman in high school. After a hiatus of a few years, I was getting back to reading comic books thanks mainly to a paper route that allowed me to afford them. Now *Batman* was going to be a television show, and I was excited.

I think my reasoning was that TV was a more mature medium than comic books. If a comic-book character could get his own TV show, teenagers and adults could watch it, and somehow that would prove comics were worthy of respect. Something like that, anyway. So I badgered some of my friends into watching that first *Batman* episode in the confident hope that they would love it and decide comics were wonderful. Then that night I actually saw the show.

You've seen the show. I don't have to describe it to you. Its title was "Hi Diddle Riddle," and besides Frank Gorshin as the Riddler, the cast included Jill St. John as a moll named... well, Molly. This is the one that has Batman and Molly dancing the Watusi at a discotheque called the What-a-Way-to-Go-Go (a take-off on a famous real discotheque called the Whiskey-a-Go-Go). Now remember, *Batman* hadn't happened yet. I was hit unprepared and unsuspecting for the first time with Robin's "Holy" whatsits and bad puns, the deliberately over-the-top dialogue, and the comic-book sound effect lettering superimposed on the screen over the fight scenes. I wasn't so slow or dense that I didn't know I was being made mock of in this show.

I tried to rationalize it. "It wasn't so bad!" I tried to put the best possible face on it. "Well, kids will like it and they'll buy more comic books!" But I still had to face my friends the next day. They weren't committed comics fans, so they didn't feel any obligation to pull their punches, and their assessment of the show was downright scathing. "You *liked* that junk?!" I felt like someone in Hollywood had betrayed me. Raised my expectations and then let me down hard.



Biljo White's pioneering fanzine *Batmania* initially celebrated the TV show.

Over two decades later, the memory of that show still haunts comics fans. With a *Batman* movie in production and the announced choice of star and director leading many fans to fear that another disaster is looming on the horizon, it might be interesting to take a look back at the TV show and see how the rest of America reacted. It also might explain why so many fans loathe the show and resent everything it led to, just in case anyone connected with the movie and wondering why fans are so hostile and suspicious, happens to read this.

1966 was the age of "Pop," the era of "Camp." Between Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup-can label and Roy Lichtenstein's blow-up comic book panels, it was hard to tell what was high art and what was just media hype. There had also been a growing interest in old comic books, and the first "Collectors will now pay as much as a hundred dollars for comic books that cost a dime in 1938" articles were beginning to appear in newspapers. Unfortunately, comic books got mixed up with the concept of "camp." As it got out to the mainstream media, "camp" was simplistically defined as something so bad it was good. Actually, "camp" had originated in the gay community as a term for things that were so aesthetically outrageous they were really kind of cute. Either way,

it wasn't good. "In Hollywood," *Batman* producer William Dozier told the *New York Times* (January 9, 1966), "they're calling me the 'King of Camp.' I hate the word 'Camp.' It sounds so faggy and funsies."

Rather, the article went on, "ABC could not afford to put the show in an expensive time slot if it only appealed to children, they don't have the buying power. 'This is a merchandising medium,' said Dozier dryly, 'not an entertainment medium.' He decided to apply the pop art technique of the exaggerated cliche, laying it on to the point where it becomes amusing to adults."

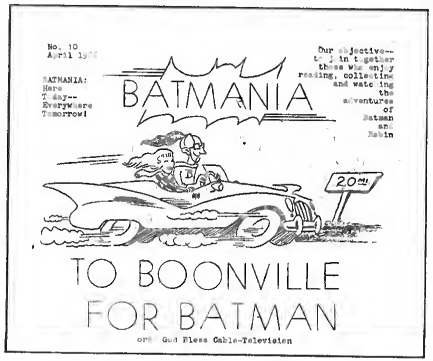
It wouldn't have been so bad if everyone had agreed with my friends. The show would have flopped, it would have been quickly cancelled, and it would be forgotten today except by a few dedicated comics fans who would have the few episodes on tape and filed next to the *Superpup* and original *Superboy* pilot cassettes. Unfortunately, literal-minded 14-year-olds were in the minority and the worst thing imaginable happened to the *Batman* TV show. It became a hit. Batmania swept the country. In the short term, comics were in the public eye as never before and sales zoomed upwards. Over the long run, the public's perception of what comics were was defined and hardened, and that perception was definitely not a good one.

And yet as a young fan at the time, I didn't have any particular commitment to Batman per se. I had cut my teeth on Superman as a lad, and as a teenager I was interested in Marvels and some other super-hero comic books, but for some reason Batman had never caught my attention. I had looked at the show with the idea it might give comics in general a boost. What about the true-believer Batman fan—the guy who really cared about the character, the guy who would look at a TV show about his favorite hero as a wonderful dream come miraculously true?

Which brings us to Biljo White, one of the founding fathers of modern comics fandom. He was an adult fan in 1966 and publisher of *Batmania*, "the Fanzine for Batman Fans." And when he found out Batman was going to be made into a TV show, boy, was he excited. His enthusiasm and glee are all over *Batmania #9*, published just before the show premiered. I wouldn't have believed a grown man could come across a typewritten, mimeographed page as jumping up and down in excited anticipation, but then I read this. He even reprinted a more patronizing than uplifting note from producer William Dozier, promising "we fervently hope we shall not let you down. We are proud to be fellow *Batmanians* or *Batmaniacs*, whichever seems more applicable."

Biljo also printed some press releases that ABC had sent him, and some of Dozier's remarks in them should have set off warning bells. With the *Batman* show, "we have a chance here not only to be good but fresh. Emphasis is on action and suspense for the youngsters and humor for the adults. Gadgets are secondary, and they are not serious. This is the form of the exaggerated cliche with a bizarre hero being pitted against even more bizarre heavies. Comic books are not done to amuse adults who don't read them, they are done to enthrall youngsters from 8-14. If that's the only audience we will have, it's much too expensive a show. We will keep and enthrall those readers, and lay on top of it a humor quotient that will amuse adults. Everything, every situation is played as though we are going to drop the bomb on Hiroshima. We play it on two different levels, one for youngsters, one for adults."

Biljo & daughter's 20-mile pilgrimage to watch *Batman*



Living as he did in outback Missouri, Biljo wasn't able to get any stations affiliated with ABC on his own TV set. As he described it in a naively charming account in *Batmania #10*, he and his five-year-old daughter had to drive 20 miles to a town with cable TV and rent a motel room for an hour or so to be able to see the premiere episode. His own comments and reactions were muted. He just seemed delighted that his favorite character was on television and the whole country was talking about it. Never mind the fact that the show was designed to make his favorite character look stupid. He even sent Dozier a congratulatory letter after the first episode aired. Dozier sent a nice note back, but an apology would have been more in order.

The same issue included a sad and disappointed open letter to Dozier by "Chief Batmanian," Tom Fagan. Fagan wanted to take everything so seriously, and couldn't understand why the show was the way it was. Complaining about Batman referring to villains as "dastardly," Fagan felt compelled to point out that the word "dastardly" went out with the Mid-Victorians. He griped in the same manner about the Riddler using the epithet, "Curses!," explaining that it "belonged to an era when sinister villains wore black moustaches, buxom misses were tied to railroad tracks, and handome but unconscious heroes were being sent down treadmills to anxiously awaiting buzzsaws."

That was precisely the *point*. Fagan, the oh-so-serious adult fan, was failing to comprehend what was going on.

Maybe it's just as well, because Dozier and his writer and story editor, Lorenzo Semple, Jr., were sneering at him and his favorite character with that show. In fact, Semple told a reporter as much (*New York Times*, January 9, 1966): "Semple says he detests the trash on television that takes itself seriously; he is now one-upping it with a supersonic level of seriousness for Batman. 'There's none of the usual violence,' Semple said. 'The show doesn't appeal to psychotics in any way. Of course, on a very sophisticated level, it's *highly* immoral, because crime seems to be fun. The only thing that could hurt the show is the great middle range of yokels. I can imagine Stanley Kowalski, as played by Marlon Brando, saying, "This is silly. People don't do that."'

By *Batmania* #13, dated December, the fans had caught on. Richard Kyle wrote an article ("The Man From B.A.T.M.A.N.") describing the appearance of William Dozier on an interview show called *Press Conference*. Dozier admitted that he had known next to nothing about Batman when the project started, and the idea originated from "a minor ABC-TV figure in New York." "He worked with writer Lorenzo Semple, Jr., to work out a style and format for the show. "High camp? I've been trying to figure out what it means ever since I used it to describe the show. I meant that Batman is so square, he's funny; that there are so many cliches, it's amusing." He added that at the initial conference with top ABC executives in New York, including ABC's president, he sent everybody present into gales of laughter by annoucing in his deadpan, portentious announcer's voice that "Batman had fought crime since he was sixteen years old, since dastardly criminals had killed his parents." That reportedly had the president of ABC rolling on the floor.

Dozier said that to justify such an expensive show in that timeslot, it had to reach an audience at least 30% adult, and that it had been successful. Kyle gloomily suggested that the enormous ratings of the first show "might have indicated a pre-sold audience, one excitedly willing to watch any Batman show. Nor did he comment on the possibility that the more subtle put-on of the vintage years of the comic book strip, from which the television series' most popular villains and plot devices have been taken could have held an even larger adult audience for the subsequent shows, when older viewers had become familiar with the squarebuilt hero and his cliches."

But even as the big joke it was, the show *was* successful. According to the *New York Times* for January 15, 1966, *Batman*'s premiere had blown the competition off the screen. In New York alone, one out of three viewers had tuned in to watch both nights' episodes, the highest ratings for any show since the Beatles appeared on *Ed Sullivan*. The question was how long it would last. "Unofficially, the word going around the industry yesterday was that 'Batman' was 'a hula-hoop hit'" Well, it did last three years. When the *Times* announced its demise (January 26, 1968), it mentioned that during its first season, *Batman* ranked 10th for its Wednesday night show and 5th on Thursday. By 1968, however, it was appearing only on Thursday nights and had slipped to 48th place. But at least during its first season, it was a monster hit.

Within days, editorial cartoonists had picked up on the show. *Batmania* reproduces some cartoons (painstakingly traced on mimeographed stencil) showing President Johnson and Vice-President Humprey as Batman and Robin even though both really look a little old for that sort of thing. Editorial cartoonists will latch on to anything that's current, of course, early this summer, hardly a week after the movie had appeared, I saw a couple of cartoons that used Roger Rabbit, one needling Dukakis and the other ridiculing "Bushy Bunny" (For that matter, I would be very surprised if some cartoonist somewhere *hasn't* used "Bushman and Quayle, the Boy Wonder." It just seems so natural.)

One thing everyone who lived through that era seems to remember was Batman on the cover of *Life* Magazine. Which he was: the cover of the March 11, 1966 issue had Adam West in his Batman suit making "a mighty leap into national popularity," as the blurb put it. Unfortunately, Adam West had a goofy expression on his face and just looked silly. The old weekly *Life* would eventually expire at the end of 1972, the victim of advertisers deserting to television, but in 1966 it was still an enormously popular magazine and a staple in hundreds of thousands of households. Was national attention like this really what comic books needed?

"*Zowie!*" the article inside gushed. "The whole country goes Supermad. There's no escape! It's all over the place. Madness! Supermadness! The entertainment world offers it on all sides, and the public gobbles it up. Batman conquers TV. Kids swing Batman capes in the backyard and Bat products are everywhere. In the theatre, craziness is a new craze. The whole country is going deliberately and profitably, *nuts*. *Batman* swooped down from the comic books to the TV screen only a few weeks ago and is already among the top 10 shows, one of the great sudden successes in entertainment history. The hero is still his spooky but saintly self, a Dracula with a halo who pops out of his Bat lair to foil his enemies with mysterious weapons. Adults can take it as a joke or lap it up like kids. Either way, Batman wins."

The article went on to discuss then current Broadway productions: *It's a Bird... It's a Plane... It's Superman* (yet another stupid, heavy-handed "camp" send-up of a comic book character and co-written by David Newman, who would go on to co-write some of the Superman movies), *The Mad Show* (based on *Mad* Magazine, complete with grinning Alfred E. Neuman as a logo), and *Marat/de Sade* [now more commonly referred to as *Marat/Sade*] (an avant garde play written as though it had really been written by the Marquis de Sade and performed by the inmates at the insane asylum where he spent his last 13 years). Next to

A poised and dignified Adam West graced *Life*'s March 11, 1966 cover.

Battyness on the slopes at Vail

some of this stuff, *Batman* must have seemed relatively normal to the *Life* staff.

Up front, the Editor's Note was entitled, "A Hard Day in the Bat Cave," and explained how *Life*'s photographer had obtained the pictures of Batman jumping on the cover, and, inside, a shot of defeated villains draped limply over railings and consoles in the Batcave while Batman stands triumphant over them. Oddly, the editorial suggests tongue-in-cheek that the thugs had "paid the extreme penalty" for penetrating the Batcave because the show's producer objects that "no villains could know of its existence" when the photographer suggested the shot. "No one but Batman and Robin and their chauffeur could enter the cave and live." The impasse was settled by agreeing that the thugs didn't survive their visit, but it was explained that "as you can see in the picture, (the photographer) killed them all." Yet in the actual article, its stated that with rare exceptions (i.e., Jill St. John falling into the atomic reactor in the second episode), the criminals "never die. They are only foiled, to come back and try another day."

Other *Life* photos give a sense of the craze: near Vail, Colorado, professional skiers are shown on their way to a costume party dressed as Batman and Robin on skis. A couple of shots show painfully young children in Batman costumes dancing or leaping (suggesting who really liked this stuff). A hairdresser gives a young woman the Bat Cut, in which eyebrows are shaved and the hairline is cut to imitate Batman's cowl. In San Francisco, the Bat Signal is projected against the side of a downtown hotel, while in Cleveland, a policeman legitimately named Gilbert Batman gives blood wearing a Batman suit in a publicity stunt to encourage blood donations. Then there's Wayne Manor in Sunnyvale, California, a nightclub garishly decorated in high camp comic-book style: "Behind a plate glass screen, girls dressed like Robin lead the crowd in the Batusi. Batman sells tickets at the front door, the maitre d' is the Joker, and drinks are served by Wonder Woman."

The bottom line of all this? "The Batman merchandisers think that their boy will soon be outselling James Bond."

And they were right.

In those days, DC Comics led an independent existence as National Periodical Publications (NPP), and was listed on the New York Stock Exchange. On March 20, 1966, the *New York Times* reported that "Batman Fad Aids Stock Rise." NPP's stock had hit an all-time high of 45-1/4, up from its 1965 low-point of 17-½. Besides the effect of the TV show, the fact that the Broadway Superman musical was about to open was cited as contributing to NPP's appeal to investors. Besides its regular comics line, which was estimated to sell 100 million copies a year and account for one-third of the entire North American market, NPP was described as being a major distributor of magazines and paperback books, and its purchase of *Mad* in 1964 was also mentioned.

"Lately, the wonder stories about Batman have been circulating in financial circles. Demand for old *Batman* comic books reportedly has skyrocketed. Brokers were telling the story about a 12-year-old boy who arrived at a magazine store in Manhattan in a chauffeur-driven limousine and paid $25 for three or four vintage books of Batman."

With showbiz success, however, comes the parasites and leeches. On June 23, the *Times* ran an article reporting that NPP was suing stores selling unlicensed Batman merchandise. The defendants included major chains like Korvettes, Walgreens, and Woolworths, who apparently let their suppliers sell them counterfeit goods instead of the real thing. "Since National Periodical receives royalties ranging from 5 to 20% from the manufacturers of toys, apparel, novelties, records and other categories for authorizing the use of the Batman and Robin names, National Periodical is, of course, quite interested in keeping other such goods out of the stores." It was estimated that by the end of 1966, $75 million worth of Batman products would have been sold, "a mark that far exceeds the merchandising results for such characters as James Bond, Davy Crockett and Mary Poppins." At that time, there were 175 authorized Batman licensees, ranging from "the Ideal Toy Company for capes and utility belts, to Hallmark Cards, Inc., for greeting cards and memo pads, to the Alison Manufacturing Company for T-shirts and sweatshirts."

The article added that the suits "followed five other complaints in the last two months issue by National Periodical against manufacturers, a retailer, a wholesaler and the producer of a movie entitled *The Wild World of Batwoman*."

Next Issue: Part II of "When America Went Batty." Batmania sweeps the country and some people don't like it. ●

Patrolman Gilbert Batman sets an example of good citizenship.

SMALL TALK

Remarking on Martin

by Edd Vick

Another value from the *L.S.D. Catalog*.

Mark Martin credits Brad W. Foster with introducing him to small press. "I saw his *Our Story Thus Far* in a bookstore," Martin's accent is deepest south: laconic and self-effacing. "I contacted him and did some work for a few of his books before starting the Gnatrat stuff." He published several hilarious parodies under the Mighty Pumpkin imprint and for Prelude Graphics, parodies that satirized a hero, a comic company, the industry as a whole, and those who let themselves be taken in by all of the above. Not a bad score for a dark night's work.

Then the bust followed the boom, as busts are wont to do. Suddenly alternative comics were a penny a pound, and nobody was buying. (Am I telling you anything here that you don't already know?)

Mighty Pumpkin retrenched, and Martin did work for other companies, most recently Mirage. For *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* #16 he wrote 'n' drew a tale of alternate futures. More to the point of this column, he threw in a double handful of references to the small press in the form of crate labels in the backgrounds. His affection for the small press is obviously sizable. So is his sense of humor, you *must* see what he did to "American Gothic."

Since there were tens of thousands of *TMNTs* printed, chances are good you've seen that issue, or that you'll see the one he's working on now, which may come out before the end of the year. Let's check out a few books with Martin's work that didn't have quite such extravagant print runs.

Hey there! Christmas is coming! You know what that means: it's time to dig out the mail order catalogs and part with a few of those hard-earned bucks. This year you can forget Lillian Vernon, throw aside Hickory Farms, burn your sears catalog. The *Lillian Spencer Drake Catalog of Values* is now available!

Martin invited a raftload of people to contribute fake items to the *LSD Catalog*. What he got in return was a conglomeration of ads for merchandise that runs the gamut from silly to disgusting, with the accent on toilet humor. High brow it ain't. *Fun* it is. Like *Items from Our Catalog*, it burlesques the American institution of lazy shopping.

Looking for an intravenous coffee pouch? Carole Sobscinski drew it for the catalog. How about a necklace that doubles as an ashtray? Dawn Wilson knew you'd want one. A home tattoo parlor? That one's from Wayno Honath. Death threat horned toads, a vibrating nose picker, table leg warmers, cigarettes that explode in your lungs, not in your mouth—there're over a hundred products here just as kooky. Other contributors include Allen Freeman, Frandy Paske and T.K. Atherton. One of the most prolific suppliers to the catalog is Harlan Ellison, most of whose items pair a new humorous caption with an illustration clipped from another catalog.

Now which relative was it I wanted to give an Itty-bitty Weenie Light? Probably the one that isn't using the Spring Action Toilet Seat.

One of the primary reasons talented people stay in small press is that they can indulge themselves. A collection of dada art, a batch of strips about hand puppets, or a special issue of an anthology devoted to robots may not be big sellers in a comic shop. They might sell enough copies to make back the production costs, though, if put out as a small press publication. Trouble is, you have to be fairly obsessed with a subject to be content with merely breaking even. Eric Mayer is one of those people, one who can communicate his fixations to others entertainingly, as he has done in *Why Me?*

Mayer is fascinated by the appurtenances of his youth. *King Cotton*, his best solo book, resuscitates characters he'd drawn in grade school. In other publications he shows a diverse talent, but rarely ventures beyond childhood and its interests.

Why Me? teams Mayer with Martin on a surreal yarn combining g-men, Josie Lajoie the famous French floozy, aliens and a load of dirty laundry. The unnamed protagonist—who may or may not be Skinny Kowalski—has his cat stolen by a French Communist disguised as a Bulgarian spy. From there it starts to get bizarre.

If this doesn't sound like anybody's youth I'm describing, it's because I haven't yet mentioned a character central to the plot: Frank Sutton. Sutton played Sgt. Carter on *Gomer Pyle, USMC*. His presence, as well as Jim Nabors's, pervades the strip. He yells at Pyle on a TV in the laundromat, the cry "Well Golllllly" is heard time and again, Nabors is on one endpaper, Sutton on the other. *Somebody* spent a lot of time in front of the boob tube.

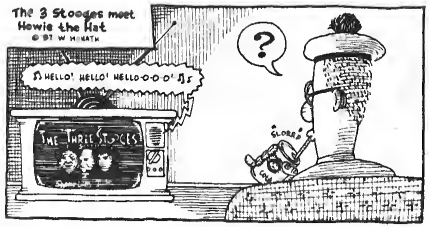
From *Why Me?*

The credits on *Why Me?* don't go into detail, but I believe Mayer pencilled it. The layouts are more simple, with fewer open panels. Too, Martin usually designs cuter characters. The cat in particular is a toothsome animal highly reminiscent of Mayer's Bad Cat (from a mini by the same name).

Another book with a fixation—actually more of a tribute—is *Yowza #2*, which has a five-page section devoted to the Three Stooges. Rick Bradford has collected work from six small pressers who obviously have as fond a memory as he does about Manny, Moe and—I mean about Larry, Moe and Curly. Wayno Honath and T.K. Atherton turn in the best work: full-page strips about the animated series and the '4th Stooge' respectively. Ah, but we were talking about Mark Martin, and he isn't in this section. He's leading off the issue, in a story written by Hal Hargit.

"The Alley" compresses the essence of childhood play-acting into a mere four pages. Two kids, Buddy and Reggie, go for a bicycle ride down an alley full of menaces. The panel borders are roughly inked, as if by a child, and the layouts (primarily Hargit's work) are clear, but crowded

"The Alley," from *Yowza #2*



From *Yowza #2*, "The Three Stooges Meet Howie the Hat."

and complicated. It's a good story. If you pass it up here, you'll have a second chance at it in the first issue of Slave Labor's *So Far, So Good*.

Now, just to close the circle, Martin is one of the contributors to *Our Story Thus Far #3*, due to appear late this year from Jabberwocky Graphix. *Our Story*, edited by Brad W. Foster, is billed as "the *ultimate* artist's jam," every page is the work of a different artist, chronicling the ongoing misadventures of everyman Mark Simmons. The third issue will bring the total number of artists involved to 84, including such comics luminaries as Michael T. Gilbert (#3), William Messner-Loebs (#3), Lela Dowling (#2) and Matt Wagner (#2). It hardly seems fair to single out four artists you're more likely to recognize, when there are so many excellent craftsmen involved—and from so many disciplines. Marc Schirmeister (#1) and Jeanne Gomoll (#1) are best known for sf fanzine cartoons, D. Tosh (#3) and Steve Willis (#2) are mainstays of the small press, cat yronwode (#1) and Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird (#2) are publisher/editors; Chester Brown (#2) and Jeff Nicholson (#3) have jumped from self-publishing into the alternatives, Real Musgrave (#3) and Roger Stine (#1) are well-respected names in the professional art scene. The list could go on and on, with several names—Trina Robbins (#1) and Kenneth Smith (#2), for example—that fall into several categories. That the storyline makes even a modicum of sense is a tribute to Foster's editing skill and, perhaps, to the sheer fun involved in following his rules. Those rules have grown to cover several typewritten sheets, but in essence narrow down to these common-sense guidelines: any given artist can only do one page; it must feature Mark Simmons; and it must further the plotline introduced by the page before. Just restrictive enough to keep the artists from going totally gonzo.

Mark Martin is a playful, eclectic and accomplished artist. For a 20-page retrospective of his work, check out the Thunder Baas trade paperback, *Oddballs*, now available for $8.95 in better comic stores.

Mentioned in this column:

King Cotton #1-6 (Eric Mayer/Groggy Comics, 279 Collingwood Drive, Rochester, NY 14621, 8 pp minis, 25 cents each)

Lillian Spencer Drake Catalog of Values (Mark Martin/Mighty Eggplant, a division of the Mighty Pumpkin Publishing Empire, 1625 Cedar Grove Road, Leeds, AL 35094, 36 pp digest, two color cover on yellow stock, $2.50 ppd)

*Our Story Thus Far #*s 1 and 2 (Jabberwocky Graphix, P.O. Box 166255, Irving, TX 75016; 32 pp digests, offset with full color covers; $2.50 and $3.00 respectively ppd)

*Why Me? #*1 (Eric Mayer/Groggy Comics, 279 Collingwood Drive, Rochester, NY 14621, 20 pp mini, $1.00 ppd)

Yowza #2 (Rick Bradford, 7537 Bigleaf Lane, Ft. Worth, TX 76137, 38 pp digest, yellow cover stock, $2.00 ppd)

"Small Press" is a blanket label for comics with small print-runs. Most are photocopied, and in black-and-white on white paper unless otherwise noted. Page count includes covers.

To order any of the above, send a short note including your name, address and a listing of the item(s) you are ordering with payment. Cash is acceptable, but make sure it isn't obvious, tape down any loose change. Please do not *attempt to order any of the above through me (unless they're mine!) or from* Amazing Heroes.

"Ppd" indicates that no stamps need be included with your order. Stamps, unless otherwise noted, should be the standard 25-cent variety.

If you self-publish a book that fits into the small press category, feel free to send me a copy for review (although I make no promises about being able to cover it...) at 5014-D Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105. Correspondence about the column should be sent to Amazing Heroes. ●

Don Rosa's INFO CENTER

Questions or corrections to: Don Rosa, 10504-B Easum Road, Louisville, KY 40299

by Don Rosa

Yes, there *is* a long while between mistakes and corrections in this column! I write "Information Center" in spurts whenever I manage to get caught up on my writing/drawing for Gladstone Comics, Oberon Comics (Holland), and various and sundry other projects! Sorry 'bout that, but let's see what certain readers have sent me in answer to my requests for assistance in recent months...

I'd been asked how DC and Marvel could possibly own the exclusive rights to use the term "super-hero." Dennis Mallonee, publisher of the Hero comic line sent me a note on the matter; I'll use some excerpts from his letter here, but I'll leave out the part where he says DC and Marvel have "unchallenged arrogance in several shadings of the words..."

A fundamental principle of trademark law is that a generic term cannot be registered as a trademark in any broad sense. However, a specific logo incorporating an otherwise generic term (or some variation thereof) might be registered. The terms "Marvel Super-Hero" or "DC Super-Hero," for example, would be registrable if they were used to identify a specific product or line of products. The term "Hero Comics" and a specific design of the "Hero" logo would be registrable if they choose to do so.

Also, what might not be registrable in one area of trade *could* be registrable in another. Oddly enough, the generic term "singer" that was mentioned in a letter to this column (in regard to the notion of Columbia Records having trademark rights to the word "singer") *is* a very prominent trademark in the *sewing machine* industry! There was a joke circulating in the gaming industry some years ago which purported to be a missive from TSR claiming exclusive use of the letters "T," "S," and "R," and instructing all recipients to cease using those letters altogether. Marvel's and DC's claim to a trademark regarding the use of the term "super-hero" is not that far removed from the TSR joke, but ends up being even funnier since DC and Marvel actually *did* it!

Another query which I hadn't been able to answer concerned the various artists on Dell's old *Woody Woodpecker* comics. I'd never paid much attention to those issues since it's always seemed to me that Dell put their *worst* artists on the Walter Lanz properties, their better people on the Warner Bros. and MGM titles, and their best folks on the Disney stuff, natch. But Gordon Matthews and Steve Rowe both sent in lists of Woody artists. You'll note that the *Woodpecker* art definitely improved toward the late '50s with a few stories by folks like Paul Murry and Harvey Eisenberg.

Woody Woodpecker artists:

Tom Hickey ('40s), Lloyd White ('45-53), Dick Hall ('47-'55), Lynn Karp ('52-'60), Phil De Lara ('56-'64), Ken Champlin ('53-'62), Paul Murry! ('59-'60), Bill Wright ('50s), Harvey Eisenberg ('50s), Frank McSavage ('50s), Bob Gregory ('60s), Jack Manning ('70s-'80s), Joe Messarli ('75-'83), Dan Gormley (covers).

Writers include Don Christensen ('53-'61), Mark Evanier ('73-'76), John Stanley ('40s), Carl Fallberg ('50s), Frank Thomas ('40s).

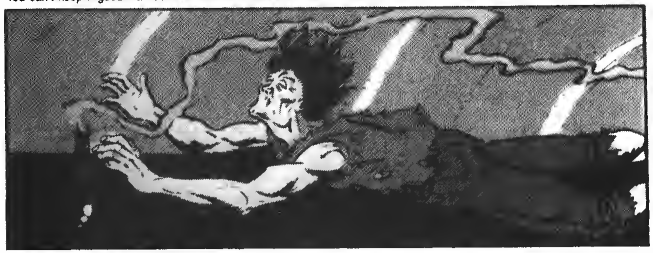
An interesting sidelight on all of this is that the Lantz property Dell artists are among the first known Dell artists due to the oddity of a list of *credits* that ran in *New Funnies #184*, the only such list ever done in a Dell comic. Since no one asked, here are some artists on other old Lantz comics...

James Pabian and John Niendorff did some *Andy Panda* stories in the early '40s; *Homer Pigeon* was drawn from 1952 on by Vivie Risto who also handled *Chilly Willy*. And I'm sure some readers are eager to point out that these "inferior artists" who worked on the Lantz comics included one Carl Barks on an old *Andy Panda* issue (*New Funnies #76*).

I had also been asked who drew *Rags Rabbit* for Harvey Comics. Steve Rowe also helps out on this'n. The actual artist is unknown, but when the character first appeared in Harvey's *Nutty Comics* in 1946-47 the art was produced by the Leon Jason shop where most of the artists had been associated with Famous Studios (such as Bill Hudson and Milt Stein).

On another occasion I was asked if Marvel's Zombie character ever appeared outside of his own title. Peter Garcia and Paul Kusnerik wrote in with a few instances of the Zombie fella appearing elsewhere. Simon (Zombie) Garth appeared in one panel of *Dracula Lives #3*, and there was an odd-ball back-up story in *Ka-Zar the Savage #34* where Ka-Zar meets all of Marvel's cancelled characters (Ghost Rider, Silver Surfer, etc.) Finally, the Zombie was featured in a full story in *Bizarre Adventures #33*.

You can't keep a good man down. Marvel's Zombie.



THE KRAZY KIWI—Auckland, New Zealand
Last year I bought a copy of *The Art of George Herriman* and was knocked for a loop by the reprints of old *Krazy Kat* strips! But by my calculations, since Krazy and Ignatz Mouse first appeared as a space filler in *The Dingbat Family* strip on July 26, 1910, through to Herriman's death in 1944, the characters appeared in 10,600 daily strips and 1,460 Sunday pages, plus animated films and a jazz-ballet. A mere 2% of the strips were reprinted in my book! So I have the following questions: Was *Krazy Kat* carried in any papers after Herriman's death? In what other books, magazines or comics has *Krazy Kat* been reprinted? Is the score for the *Krazy Kat* ballet available from any source? Can you provide any information on the Kat's celluloid appearances?

Well, since I grew up in the '50s during the first stages of the decline of newspaper comic strips, I've never endeavored to become as knowledgeable as I should in the field of the Golden Age of comic strips ('20s-'40s). And I'm not going to try to stumble around answering questions about George Herriman with the writers and editors of Fantagraphics Books' *Nemo* magazine watching. Perhaps they can answer the question of when the final *Krazy Kat* strip appeared, or where the strip has been reprinted over the years. All I can offer is that I have a book titled *George Herriman's Krazy Kat*, 1969, Grosset & Dunlap. This book reprints an old preface by e.e. cummings that I suspect first appeared in the only other reprint volume I know of, a 1946 edition by Holt Publishers.

In comic books, Dell published five issues of a *Krazy Kat* comic in 1951-52, followed by the Kat being featured in *Four Color* #454, 504, 548, 618, 696 and the shoe store give-away issues, *March of Comics* #72 and 87. Also, there was a one-shot comic in 1963 based on some current TV cartoons. Needless to say, though the Dell issues were typically good, Herriman had nothing to do with their contents. However, Herriman *Krazy Kat* strips were reprinted in *Ace Comics* #1-37 from David McKay in 1937-40.

Can't help you on the ballet score, but I know a bit about the Kat's animation history. William Randolph Hearst, owner of King Features Syndicate (controller of the *Krazy Kat* strip) opened an animation studio in 1916 to promote his comic strips at the movie houses and *Krazy Kat* cartoons were among those he produced. Next, Bray Studios did some *Krazy Kat* cartoons in 1918, and Bill Nolan produced more in 1925. All these were, of course, silent and black-and-white, and no more than a couple or three of 'em are still in existence. Next, however, Charles Mintz began producing talky *Krazy Kat* cartoons for Columbia pictures, and between 1928 and 1940 he made just short of 100 *Krazy Kat* cartoons. Beyond that, in 1963 King Features produced a TV show with three starring characters: Snuffy Smith, Beetle Bailey, and Krazy Kat, but forget I said that since they aren't worth your attention.

So if someone sends me a bit more data about the other matters, you'll be a "heppy kat."

The original *Krazy Kat* comic strip.

JUST CALL ME SMOKEY THE BEAR, HOT STUFF! HEY! WHAT THE...??
LOOK OUT! YOU ALMOST HIT ME WITH THAT AWFUL STUFF!
SUE! YOU'VE DONE IT! YOU CREATED A SHIELD OF INVISIBLE ENERGY!

Sue learns a new trick in *Fantastic Four* #22.

MARK LOCKWOOD—Seattle, WA
When did Sue Storm first start tossing invisible force shields around? How was this new power of hers introduced? Was there any attempt to explain it or was the reader simply to assume she had always had it and had never bothered to use it???

Apparently you read a reprint of *Fantastic Four* #1 and noticed that in that adventure involving the Fantastic Four's first foe, the Mole Man, all Sue Storm could do was turn herself invisible. I guess it didn't take long for Stan-and-Jack to realize that was a sorta puny super-power when the *Fantastic Four* began facing more and more of those Marvel-style cosmos-squashing super-villains!

So, on the occasion of "The Return of the Mole Man" in *Fantastic Four* #22 (Jan. 1964), Sue Storm gained two new powers. Reed Richards, suspecting there was more to Sue's powers, was testing her with a typically impossible-looking Kirby machine when wouldn't ya know it, the Torch and the Thing started fighting (ah... the good ol' Marvel Age of Comics, huh?). Sue suddenly projected an invisible force field between the rowdies, and Reed proclaimed that radiation from his nuclear testing device must have increased her energy level.... Reed always just seemed to *know* stuff all the time. Wotta' guy! Other than the force field business, later that same issue Sue found she could make *other* objects invisible besides her sweet self.

How many comic book western heroes have there ever been, and how do you tell them all apart???

Okay... I get it! pretty good! All right, where's Allen Funt hiding? Hey, Allen... You in that closet? Where's the camera?

COMICS in review

DETECTIVE COMICS #592-593

Written by ALAN DAVIS & PAUL NEARY; pencilled by NORM BREYFOGLE; inked by STEVE MITCHELL; edited by DENNIS O'NEIL. Published by DC COMICS

BATMAN #426-427

Written by JIM STARLIN; pencilled by JIM APARO; inked by MIKE DECARLO; edited by DENNIS O'NEIL. Published by DC COMICS

There are four *Spider-Man* titles. There are three *Superman* titles. Depending on how much genealogical research you want to do, you might be able to figure out how many mutant books there are. I refuse to try. There are two *Batman* books, if you don't count the occasional mini-series. I don't know if this is a case of tasteful restraint on the part of DC or if they've figured out that the market will only support two. I suppose we'll find out when the movie comes out and the world goes (I'm sorry) batty.

Currently, we have *Detective Comics* and *Batman*, and it would be difficult to find two comics that feature the same character with such different approaches. Maybe it has something to do with editor Denny O'Neil's desire to portray two distinctly different sides of what is one of the more psychologically interesting and metaphorically rich super-hero comic book characters. Maybe it's the fact that the writer of one book is an American and the writers of the other are a couple of Brits, and what we're seeing here is the fundamentally different way these cousin nations view the world. Or, maybe this is the difference between craft and commercialism.

John Wagner and Alan Grant are a couple of really baroque guys. The series of stories they are working on in *Detective Comics* is called "Batman's Casebook," and are, as the title would indicate, vignettes. There's no continuity in that no subplots dangle from issue to issue. The stories usually revolve around Batman tracking down a criminal, sometimes through detective work, sometimes by simply stumbling across a crime. Notably, there is no Robin in tow and no supporting characters beyond Jim Gordon showing up and saying, "It's a dead guy," and then shuffling offstage.

Issues #592 and 593, a two-part story called "Diary of a Madman," are a fine example of the sorts of stories these gentlemen, along with artist Norm Breyfogle, are doing. The madman's name is Stirk (stir crazy?), a recent parolee from Arkham Asylum. (You ever wonder what their insurance rates are like?) Stirk has a peculiar problem, a hypothalamic disorder. As a side effect, he has the ability to transform his appearance, either in reality or hypnotically: it's never made clear. Stirk doesn't like his drugs and stops taking them. He prefers his old-fashioned method of torturing victims and somehow absorbing the needed hormones psionically. It's a strange idea that never gets clearly explained, but it works because of the sheer momentum of the story and because Bregyfogle's art conveys what's happening. Stirk is a really first-class psycho, rendered more fascinating by the fact that he isn't trying to take over the world. He's a junkie trying to get a fix. "And no expensive prescription charges," he chortles.

Wagner and Grant have centered their Batman stories in *Detective Comics* around the theme of how individuals cope with the horrors that life can inflict on us. The currently fashionable version of Batman is a person who was traumatized by a horrible event, namely the murder of his parents. Frank Miller, to his credit, figured out that this event, though terrible, did not carry the weight that it once did, and so he conjured up a totem beast, a spirit that inhabited the boy and bent his will. Of course, it's possible that there wasn't really any giant bat, that it's all just a phantom of poor, sensitive Bruce's imagination and that he's gone completely around the bend. The point is that it doesn't really matter. Bruce *thinks* it happened and it is his prescription for action. Bruce confronts his trauma and deals with it, though in an admittedly unconventional manner.

The stories that Wagner and Grant are telling in their "Casebook" stories are of individuals who have lived through traumatizing events but not worked them out as well as Bruce did. Of course, some of the things that happen to these characters are pretty extreme. I particularly enjoyed the two-part story with Scarface and the three-part story about the Corrosive Man and Mr. Kadaver, both fine examples of individuals with colorful personality problems.

Robin finally gets his, courtesy of the Joker in *Batman* #427.

Norm Breyfogle provides fine pencils to go along with the stories. I was not impressed with Breyfogle's work on First Comics' *Whisper*, but his work on *Detective* is dramatic and intense. I like the way he plays around with angles and doesn't seem to care that he draws Batman with a chin you could park a Buick on.

GRADE: VERY FINE

As much as I've enjoyed the current run of *Detective*, I've been slightly flummoxed by *Batman*. After a really lame series of stories following Miller's *Year One*, editor O'Neil tracked down a team that seemed interested in staying on for a while: Jim Aparo and Jim Starlin. Individually, Starlin and Aparo have done enjoyable work over the years and I expected some well-crafted, if conventional, stories for a few months.

But, gosh, what the heck is going on in *Batman* #426 and 427? Well, first, they were both double-sized, though, to tell the truth, I'm not sure there is really enough story to warrant such a move. The whole bit about the Joker stealing a missile and selling it to the Arabs is just plain silly. Putting super-villains out among real-world menaces is always jarring and any versimilitude is lost. Super-villains and super-heroes are metaphorical constructs, and inserting them into these sorts of situations renders them transparent and unbelievable.

All of this leads up to the Joker cornering Robin. It's the scene we've all been waiting for ever since the first time we said to ourselves, "Hey, why do the bad guys always tie up the good guys and tell them their plans, giving the good guy time to get away?" Not this time. This time the Joker picks up a crowbar and beats the crap out of Robin. To Starlin and Aparo's credit, it is effectively horrifying. Then, the Joker takes some dynamite and blows up Robin real good. The title of the story is, by the way, "A Death in the Family."

You might well ask yourself, "What's this guy's problem? Why so cynical? Doesn't he care what happens to poor old Robin?"

Well, truthfully, no. And, neither, apparently, does the writer or artist. Robin, or Jason Todd, hasn't been anything but a prop since the *Crisis* revision. DC has been advertising this for months and they've even got a contest going to determine whether Jason gets pulverized or not. You think I'm cynical? I know comic book fans—they're a bloodthirsty lot and Jason has never been particularly popular. Killing off Jason would be a fulfillment of hints dropped in *Dark Knight*, the sort of cross-continuity that makes the fanboys sweat. Nobody seems to remember that the next thing that happened in Miller's timeline is that Bats quit.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons #1

So, is this a story or a sales pitch? Well, it's both, and, believe it or not, I have no strenuous objections to that. However, I do get a little cranky when the marketing ploys seem to get more attention than the plot. If this tele-a-plot idea of DC's works out, they might be able to get rid of the writers altogether.

Jim Aparo's artwork is, as always, professional and polished, and while I'm always pleased to see his work, it somehow seems at odds with the teeth-gritting first-person narration that Starlin has been using. Aparo is a much more happy, bright, ya-hoo-we're-super-heroes artist, and though I know he's been identified as a Batman artist over the years, I believe the changes that have taken place in the character make his interpretation look a bit dated. On the other hand, it beats Dave Cockrum and Don Heck.

GRADE: VERY GOOD —*Jeff Lang*

GINGER FOX #1

Written by MIKE BARON; illustrated by THE PANDER BROTHERS; edited by DIANA SCHUTZ. Published by COMICO

Okay, soap fans—this is the big one!

Sleaze, sex and celluloid have returned to your local comics shop. Yes, the irrespressible Mike Baron has done it to us again with his lovely new mini-series, *Ginger Fox*.

The series deals with Fox's efforts to complete the ultimate monster movie. The problems include a star who turns out to have AIDS; the return of Fox's ex-husband; the kidnapping of Doris by an unscrupulous gossip columnist, the ever unsubtle Babs the bodyguard (eat your heart out Mr. T!) and much, much more.

It constantly amazes me how much information Mike Baron can cram into a single issue of a comic without making it seem cluttered and disorganized. Here, he has done it again.

The art of the Pander Brothers is also consistently amazing. For such an angular style, the Panders show a lot of curve—a lot of subtlety. Their strong linework almost makes any other artistic effects unnecessary, and yet they do have other strengths, not the least of which is layouts.

Between Baron's writing and the Pander Brothers' art there is no seam. This is a team effort in the same sense that *Nexus* is a team effort. The art and script complement each other almost perfectly, in just the same way.

This is a fast-paced romp through the sordid and the sleazy. If television soaps moved like this they might actually be worth watching for something other than the gorgeous casts.

Once again Mike Baron has created a winner. The book is fun and thought-provoking. It is a world like no other in comics.

If, like me, you didn't snap up the graphic novel, "The World of Ginger Fox" don't make the same mistake here.

Ginger Fox, a four-issue collector's series"—*buy this book!!*

GRADE: PRISTINE MINT—*Sheldon Wiebe*

ADVANCED DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS #1

Written by MICHAEL FLEISHER; illustrated by JAN OUURSEMA; edited by BARBARA KESEL. Published by DC COMICS INC.

Imgig Zu, an evil inhuman sorcerer, has stolen the talisman of power, Selune's Eye, but after six years he has not been able to find a magic-user able to activate it. Growing desperate, he sends his winged minions to capture anyone they can find with even a trace of magical powers. They seize three elves, but a fourth, Cybriana, is rescued by two passing warriors, the centaur Timoth and the dwarf Onyx. By the end of this first issue, the three have been joined by two more companions and a quest is taking shape to rescue Cybriana's sisters and to thwart Imgig Zu's schemes to conquer the world.

I enjoyed Margaret Weis' and Tracy Hickman's three-volume "Dragonlance Chronicles," and I feel that the current Graphic Novel adaptation of it by Roy Thomas and Thomas Yeates is an unfortunate but understandable skeletal abridgment. This *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* comic book has a similar feeling of being a shallow condensation of a much meatier saga, although I don't know whether this is true or not. If the story is original, Michael Fleisher may be missing a beat if he does not expand it into a full-scale novel for TSR. At any rate, what you get here is a flashy and fast-paced sword-and-sorcery adventure full of exotic warriors and evil monsters. The characters all converse in grandiloquent dialogue, and there are plenty of ponderous captions such as, "The monster's cruel laughter echoes malevolently off the cobblestoned walls . . ." (page 5).

GRADE: VERY GOOD —*Frederick Patten*

THE TRUE NORTH #1

Written & illustrated by VARIOUS. Published by THE COMIC LEGENDS LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

For those who aren't aware of it, Comic Legends is a comic shop in Canada that was recently invaded by the Mounties, who confiscated 192 comics and brought charges against three staff members for selling obscene materials . . . not to any of the minors who frequent the store, but to adults. This book's profits are intended to help the store's legal battle.

As benefit books go, I'm pleased to say that this one hangs together a good deal better than did two other recent ones: Last Gasp's *Strip Aids U.S.A.* and Mad Love's *AARGH!*, both dealing in large part with persecution of gays. While it's true that all three books devote their stories exclusively toward jabs at the situation they're protesting, a practice I confess I don't really understand, for some reason *True North* has a higher percentage of tales that are simply well-done comics, while the other two lean more toward stories that are mainly dull and repetitious. Possibly *True North* suited me more by dint of the fact that it was a smaller book, and thus lacked the space to repeat its message as often as did the others.

Chester Brown's lead-off piece points out the illogic behind the latest censorship drives quite well, while the Greg Holfield *Dan Panic* page also deals with that aspect subtly yet surely. The Hancock-Cherkas *Suburban Nightmare* story chooses to deal with the very scary potential end-result of such search-and-seizure missions, and should be required reading for all comics fans at least. Also worth more than a casual look are the Shainblum-Morrisette "Media Violence" piece, the Dave Darrigo text *Wordsmith* tale, the Askwith-Taylor "Vox Populi" story, and the book's closing epic, a *Night Life* opus by the book's organizers, Derek McCulloch and Simon Tristam. The pieces that don't work as well are few, far between and short, and while they suffer in comparison to the highlights, they do work well enough to be tolerable.

I urge everyone out there to pick up *True North* not only because it's got good work within it, but also because it's for a cause we can't afford to be apathetic on. The folks at Comic Legends are fighting for their right to sell adult material to adults, and for our right to buy and read it if we want. The fact that they're located in Canada while most of AH's readers are residents of the USA is immaterial. If we let them get away with it in Canada, how long will we have before it's happening here as well? Can we dare hope that Friendly Frank's was an isolated incident? I truly wish we could.

But enough soapboxing. Aside from serving a worthy cause, *True North* is a book that deserves reading. It's a book you can feel good about buying, and for all the right reasons for a change. You can't get a much better deal than that.

GRADE: VERY GOOD —*David Peattie*

TONY BRAVADO #1

Written by OAVE OARRIGO; illustrated by STEVE LEBLANC & LOUIS PARADIS. Published by RENEGADE PRESS

As writer/creator Dave Darrigo has pointed out, there aren't a lot of original crime comics being published these days. *Tony Bravado* is his effort to expand the genre just a tad.

The first issue introduces us to this ex-cop/ex-bodyguard turned trouble-shooter. At the start of the series Bravado works for Lance Palmer, owner of the fabulous chain of Eden Resorts and the publisher of *Eden* Magazine (unlike Hugh Hefner's now defunct empire, Palmer's highly successful clubs and resorts provided the base for the creation of the magazine).

Bravado's first assignment (or at least the first we see) is to eliminate the problems being caused by the former manager of the Eden Resort in Jamaica.

Tony Bravado #1

Considering the small potatoes magnitude of the problem, it isn't surprising that Bravado sorts it out in a hurry. Darrigo is setting up the series here, and all we need is a glimpse of the man at work to get the picture. What's more important is the way Darrigo sets up our introduction to the book's lead character.

The first two pages of "Dirty Jobs" deal with the sights and sounds that fill the morning for Bravado. Sunrise, the alarm going off, the electric razor, the shower.

Like Max Collins, Dave Darrigo can give the reader a maximum of information with a minimum of verbiage, or he can wax eloquent to equal effect. This ability was one of the highlights of his previous series, *Wordsmith*, and is used to telling effect here. By the time Bravado has performed his morning rituals and set out for Jamaica, we are relating to him.

During the course of the first issue we see Bravado reading a book on Communism in Europe, musing on the whys of doing his job and actually performing his assignment.

Darrigo has given Bravado toughness and sensitivity in the right measures. If there is any area where the book is weak, it has to be the art.

Steve LeBlanc and Louis Paradis are not bad artists by any stretch, but they don't seem to have quite found the handle on *Tony Bravado*. In some parts, their work is detailed, in others minimally so. They do some dark stuff and some light stuff, and not always at the most appropriate times. If they are attempting to artistically enhance the contradictions of the character, it isn't quite working. At least not yet.

Still, there is an awful lot of potential here. I suspect that as LeBlanc and Paradis settle into the character the book will become at least a cult favorite.

Recommended with reservations.

GRADE: FINE —*Sheldon Wiebe*

JONNY QUEST SPECIAL #1

Written by ARTHUR BYRON COVER; pencilled by RICHARD HOWELL; inked by JIM MOONEY; edited by DIANA SCHUTZ. Published by COMICO

To this devoted fan of the regular *Jonny Quest* comic book, this *Special #1* is a *big* disappointment! A lot happens at breakneck speed, so much that Jonny and the regular cast are completely bewildered—and so is the reader.

A dimensional warp materializes just outside the Quest Institute, triggered by the arrival of an adventurer in a time machine and an alien cat-girl who he picked up on his travels. They are fleeing enemies who are attacking them. "I never knew why.

When is a toaster not a toaster? In *Stray Toasters* #1.

I never cared why," the adventurer says. Suddenly more sets of dimensional travelers start popping out in rapid succession, both humans and aliens, both criminals and lawmen (maybe—they act more like trigger-happy bounty hunters), including evil duplicates of Jonny, Hadji, Dr. Quest, Race, and even Bandit. Soon there is a five-way free-for-all going on, with rayguns blazing in all directions in the midst of a timewarp hurricane, until Dr. Quest orders Jonny to attack the cat-girl, which sends everybody back to his or her proper worlds. "Don't worry. I'll explain everything," Dr. Quest tells Jonny, but the next panel begins, "... and that's *it*, son," so the reader never does find out what was going on.

This *Special* has none of the charm of the regular series. There the adventures seem to develop naturally because of reasonable actions by the Quest team. Here they seem to be the victims of a weird happenstance. The time adventurer turns out to be Dr. Quest's youthful grandfather, but there is no feeling that this relationship has anything to do with his time machine being drawn to the Quest Institute. It seems to have emerged from the timestream there through pure coincidence. There are none of the human interest touches that are usually present to make the Quest team such believable and likable characters. The only good thing about this *Special* is the five-page art gallery at the end.

GRADE: FAIR —Frederick Patten

STRAY TOASTERS #1

Written & illustrated by BILL SIENKIEWICZ; edited by DANIEL CHICHESTER, STEVE BUCCELLATO & ARCHIE GOODWIN. Published by MARVEL/EPIC

What do you do when you really just don't understand something too well? I'm talking about comic books here, not real life. (That's *another* problem!) You read the thing. You read it again. And it just won't come into a sharp focus for you. Does it "really" make sense but you just don't see it? Is it too complex for your feeble little mind? Or is it itself somehow flawed? (I.e. it's not really your fault!) Or is it just that it's incomplete? It is, after all, just the first part of a greater whole. Maybe it will make sense when you read the rest of it. Maybe. But what if it doesn't?

This is more or less the situation I find myself in with *Stray Toasters* #1. In many ways I find it both gripping and thought-provoking. It is certainly powerful and intense. But I don't feel I have the "big picture" yet.

Let's see now. Deborah Dissler is consulting a psychiatrist named Abby, about Deborah's problem with her mate. (Or is it his problems with her?) Arriving home after a session, Deborah finds that her mate has been eavesdropping on her session with Abby and he's not pleased—not pleased *at all*. He is also, it seems, a toaster. (*Why* is he a toaster? Or *is* he a toaster, "really?") Deborah seems concerned about her "boy," Todd. But the Toaster demands that he "unstick" him and she is electrocuted in the process.

Egon Rustemagik is a criminal psychologist who is called in by the police to help investigate Deborah's murder. Egon had previously been "put away" in an institution and is considered unstable by Police Sgt. Al Wenzel. Egon wrote a book, which everyone mentions when they see him—along with the fact that they all hate it. Egon is also an alcoholic and sometimes has trouble distinguishing his dreams from reality. In his investigation, Egon goes to talk to Abby, Deborah's psychiatrist. But Abby is also Egon's former lover, from his pre-institutional days. And when he confronts Abby, she is having a session with Assistant DA Harvard Chalky, who is also the lawyer who put Egon away into the institution. Needless to say, a messy scene ensues. (Made messier by Harvard's "feeding frenzy." He thinks he's a shark, you see.)

Abby reveals to the readers that she and Egon had a son—a son who is now dead, a son named Todd. When she gets home, she confronts a young boy she found on her doorstep the day before. She calls him "Todd." He cannot remember anything that happened more than four months ago. And he loves toast.

Oh yes, there's this guy, Phil, who writes postcards to Emily in Hell and who is looking to buy a lawyer. He finds ... Harvard Chalky.

All of this is not even to *mention* Mona (not even Abby knows who Mona is) and Dahlia.

So, I'm confused.

For instance, this toaster business. Is the Toaster *really* a toaster? At times, this seems clearly metaphorical. The Toaster talks about Deborah's mind as a blender, her heart as a refrigerator, and of her "oven," not to mention his own "drill." But then at other times it seems so very literal. Deborah tells the toaster: "you're metal," and she is electrocuted by him. The police say the murderer is seven feet eight inches tall and weighs six hundred pounds—and that he left screws and nuts (and oil stains) "everywhere." Just like Egon, we readers would seem to have difficulty distinguishing the real from the unreal.

And why is the news program conducted like a game show? Why is female infant mortality 80%? Why are dogs dying but cats thriving?

But most importantly: Is this a good comic book?

I don't know.

Maybe I'll know by the time the series is finished. Certainly, I found it an absorbing reading experience—and will read it again. It is certainly worth a look, not the least of the reasons being Sienkiewicz's typically brilliant, inventive, and powerful artwork. Maybe it'll seem obvious to you. But me, I'm still thinking about it.

And that, in itself, is not a bad result of reading a comic book.

GRADE: ? —T.M. Maple

STRIKEFORCE MORITURI #26

Written by JAMES D. HUDNELL; pencilled by MARK BAGLEY; inked by VAL MAYERIK; edited by CARL POTTS. Published by MARVEL COMICS

From its inception, *Strikeforce Morituri* has been one of Marvel's most consistently excellent books. Issue #26, "The End of the War," or "The Last Morituri," continues this trend.

The title of the cover refers to the final defeat of the Horde, while the title from the interior refers to Brava, the sole remaining Morituri of her generation, and possibly the last Morituri to be needed.

The story deals with Brava's determination to go out with a bang; the final retreat of the horde and our first glimpse of the second alien race.

James D. Hudnall can write. His brief history of the Hordian conquest and the advent of the Morituri strikeforce is as informative as it is concise. His depiction of Brava's dreams, fears and concerns is genuinely moving. The action sequences are very nicely paced. Even our first glimpse of the second alien race, in all its seeming simplicity, opens up a whole new set of questions, a situation that is gently but effectively underscored by Brava's open-ended thoughts at the end of the issue.

Artwise, Mark Bagley and Val Mayerik are a pretty decent art team. Although proportion is frequently sacrificed for effect, these guys work well together. They manage to convey the same combination of fluidity and angularity that Carmine Infantino and Murphy Anderson brought to the early Flash. Their simple but effective layouts propel the story at exactly the right pace. They handle violence and death as easily as introspection.

Overall, this may not be the best issue of this series, but it is surely very close.

If you want intelligent, articulate and passionate comics, you most often must look to independents. Fortunately, not everyone at the Big Two has forgotten how to provide these elements in a comic. *Strikeforce Morituri* is a prime example.

Recommended without reservation.

GRADE: MINT —Sheldon Wiebe

TROLLORDS #1

Written & illustrated by SCOTT BEADERSTADT & PAUL FRICKE with LEN STRAZEWSKI; edited by MICHAEL EURY. Published by COMICO

When the black-and-white boom burst—the *Trollords* survived. When no-talent hacks prospered—The *Trollords* survived. Now they face their greatest challenge—*Color!*

Yes, the sublime slapstick silliness of the supernatural stooges is available in glorious, living color.

Perhaps it's the need we seem to have for a certain amount of silliness that makes this book work, perhaps it's the metaphysical underpinning (the Trollord's arch-enemy, after all, is Death—the Ultimate Bully.

Their first color issue finds Larry, Harry, and Jerry preventing a suicidal Cliff Barker from committing said self-destructive act. In so doing, they learn he has become the ultimate Stephen Muerte fan.

Believing Cliff's death wish to be related to Muerte's books, the stooges (sorry, *Trollords*), transport Barker to Muerte's unusual abode. Before long, it becomes apparent that Death has a hand in the scenario.

Because of the simplicity of the plot, *Trollords* is able to set up a situation of horror and humor with seeming ease. The Cliff (Clive) Barker and Stephen Muerte (King) characters different enough from their models to create a sense of unpredictability. The *Trollords* do not so much thwart Death as allow him to thwart himself in his eagerness.

The story telling here is beautiful. The combination of almost kaleidoscopic layouts, serious foreshadowing, slapstick and characterization is probably unique in comics. The storyline is propelled forward with a minimum of fuss. As a result, the reader is hooked before he can even realize it.

This book is a good one. Creators Beaderstadt and Fricke will almost certainly benefit by the move to COMICO and color.

Highly recommended.

GRADE: MINT —Sheldon Wiebe

IRON MAN #238

Written by DAVID MICHELINIE & BOB LAYTON; pencilled by JACKSON GUICE; inked by BOB SHAREN; finished art by BOB LAYTON; edited by HOWARD MACKIE. Published by MARVEL COMICS

Scene: Los Angeles, California. So wouldn't you know the action begins with a violent earthquake? Well, not really. It proves to be The Rhino. He casually smashes into the wall of the L.A.P.D. headquarters as though it were papier-mache. The beefy baddie has been hired to rescue Donny (Blizzard) Gill during the prisoner's transfer to his court hearing. Mr. Gill is none-too-happy about being sprung by an armor-plated giant "... with the IQ of a cabbage!" Ingrate.

Elsewhere, Tony Stark cruises to victory at the Santa Rosa speedway, breaks up a catfight between his airhead girlfriend and the Race Queen, then—as Iron Man—dashes off to film a commercial for Stark Enterprises somewhere in the Mojave desert. Talk about a workaholic. Upon learning The Rhino has snatched Gill from the hoosegow, the metallic hero tries to shrug it off.

"I can't solve the whole world's problems," Iron Man sensibly tells himself.

Trollords #1.

About the same time, the head of The Maggia, a criminal cartel, takes a couple of slugs from a mysterious intruder. Guess it isn't *her* day either.

Not enough action for you? Okay, let's zip over to LAX as Rhino demolishes half the airport, leaving a bevy of ticked-off tourists in his wake. (Like it's not hard enough catching your flight in time on a *normal* day.) Finally on page 25 begins the anticipated good guy/bad guy clash as Iron Man decides he *can* fit Blizzard and Rhino into his busy schedule after all.

Ever the businessman, the disguised Stark plans ahead. "Vehicle replacement costs are soaring!" he thinks while proceeding to wallop Rhino with a fuel truck. "But my tax people should appreciate the write-off potential!"

Gotta admire the fellow's logical approach to life.

Apparently the "New" Iron Man is doing his predecessor justice (remember the "death" of the original back in *Iron Man* #230?). Tony Stark is still playing his millionaire joyboy role to the hilt. It is always fun when superheroes have to go out of their way to behave like pleasure-seeking narcissists on their days off. And while Stark isn't as nauseating as some, he sure ain't a guy *I'd* invite over for coffee.

Start running that cold shower because the Rhodey/Pearson romantic sub-plot gets steamier than ever in this issue. The two lovebirds spend a cozy afternoon cavorting in the employees-only jacuzzi. Probably on bossman's time, the little devils.

In spite of The Rhino's performance (definitely *not* one of my favorite meanies) I was satisfied with the story. Who doesn't enjoy seeing a disliked character get his butt stomped? As far as artwork goes, it's great. Some pages were similar to a 3-D movie, sharp and superbly inked. Neat job all around.

Iron Man #238's final page hints that poor overworked Mr. Stark isn't out of the woods yet—not by a long shot. If *Iron Man* writers keep up the pace, the next few issues will certainly be on my must-see list. To sum up, "To live or die in L.A.!" is a winner.

Sounds like a good title for a movie, doesn't it? Naw...

GRADE: VERY FINE —**VIRGINIA WILLIAMS-PENNICK**

ELFQUEST: SIEGE AT BLUE MOUNTAIN #7

Written by RICHARD & WENDY PINI; penciled by WENDY PINI; inked by JOE STATON; edited by RICHARD PINI. Published by APPLE COMICS

As a big fan of the original *Elfquest* series, I must admit to being let down by *Siege at Blue Mountain*.

I can't put my finger on the exact

Elfquest: Siege at Blue Mountain #7.

reason. Perhaps it has something to do with Joe Staton's angular inks over Wendy Pini's fluid pencils. (Of course, I still think this is some of Staton's best work, so maybe that's not it.)

Perhaps it has something to do with the pacing. Or perhaps I find it hard to believe that some characters would be led astray as easily (and without the expected resistence) as they have been. (Of course, considering the abilities Winnowill has exhibited, perhaps I expect too much from some characters.)

As the series winds down I find myself wondering if this is the story the Pinis really wanted to write. The writing seems too cluttered. There are so many captions that they distract the reader's eyes from the art (maybe that's why I don't get as much impact from the art).

Perhaps eight issues isn't enough to tell the story properly. Could it be that the Pinis have tried to do too much in too short a space?

Issue seven of *Siege* seems ponderous in its development. There is a sense of stasis here. Nothing flows as it should. Still, there is enough of the feel of the original series to intrigue, if not beguile the reader. Some brief moments shine as the *Elfquest* of old: Leetah's attempt to cure Two Edge of his madness is a sterling example. Another shining moment comes when Dart cuts the humans free and stumbles over Geoki's name.

Perhaps (there's that word again) I'm being unduly hard on this book. Unfortunately, although there is nothing that I can point to and say "There! This is what's wrong!," there is little that I can point to to show excellence.

What it boils down to is that this book, this series, is lacking the life of the original series. It just isn't as much fun. There isn't much here that's new.

Still, imperfect *Elfquest* is better than no *Elfquest* at all (and that's a damn sight better than the tripe that dominates the racks these days).

Elfquest: Siege at Blue Mountain is at least worth a look.

GRADE: VERY GOOD —**Sheldon Wiebe**

VIETNAM JOURNAL #6

Written and illustrated by DON LOMAX, edited by HILARY HUGHES. Published by APPLE COMICS

Every time I turn around, someone's raving about Marvel Comics and how great it is that they publish "realistic" books like *The 'Nam* and *Semper Fi'*, and at the same time completely ignoring the fact that Marvel isn't exactly alone in its efforts. Thus, it gives me great pleasure at this time to sing the praises of a book that, as far as I'm concerned, outdoes both of Marvel's much-ballyhooed books, *Vietnam Journal*, from Apple Comics.

For some reason, Lomax is able to hit home with me much more often and more effectively than are Doug Murray and his crew at Marvel. His dialogue is natural, and while his artwork is a shade on the cartoony side, in this book it doesn't seem to hurt at all, because the writing is more than capable of drawing out the horrors of war. I suspect that this is in large part due to the fact that Lomax himself is a Vietnam vet; I don't know if Murray is also, but I suspect not. The stories in *Journal* feel like they were written by someone who was there, the stories in the *'Nam* book don't, at least not to me.

Another aspect of the book worth commenting on is the fact that Lomax has developed only one star for the book: its titular character, Journal. Marvel's books try to show the real horror of war by showing how people can die at literally any moment, by allowing us one or two months to get to know a particular soldier and then having his character killed off, regardless of whether or not that character was popular with the fans. Lomax strives for the same thing, by allowing Journal to consistently survive and tell us how it feels to have men die all around you. In *Vietnam Journal*, Lomax lays out the ugliness of war, and paints its myriad participants as human beings... none of whom wanted to be there, none of whom wanted to be killing other people (for the most part) and none of whom were really willing to die for the war's nebulous goals... yet they were all there anyway. If Lomax fails at all, it's in not showing more of the feelings of the people Journal meets in his travels, and how they feel about the war, their roles in it, why each individual is there, et al. Journal's viewpoint makes good reading, but after six issues I think we already know how he feels to a large extent.

In *Vietnam Journal* #6, Lomax allows Journal to get some hands-on battle experience, whereas in previous issues Journal had pretty much been off to the sides, a fascinated observer to what was going on around him. Now actively involved (and wounded) for the first time, we are offered our first glimpse of how terrifying it is to be at war, and the flashbacks to Korea that Journal experiences tell us a little bit more about him and how his personality is shaped. Sadly, the few short snatches of this we are granted this issue weren't enough to leave me completely satisfied, due to Lomax's insistence that the majority of the book be devoted to the battle itself as opposed to Journal's role in it. Nevertheless, I'm hopeful that we'll see more of it in future issues.

Two final aspects of the book that I've always found intriguing are the "Back in the World" and "Missing Americans" feature pages. I confess I'm a bit mystified by the former; I can see telling the readers what the actual war is like on the date in question, helping to place Journal's stories at actual points during the conflict, but I don't understand why Lomax dwells on events that are relatively unaffected by the war or that don't have any effect on their own in the war. They make for somewhat amusing reading before you settle into the story, but they don't seem to serve any real purpose that I can see. As to the "Missing Americans" pages, each one describing a different MIA from the war whose fate is still unknown, I feel Lomax should be commended heartily for his efforts to keep reminding the government that we still have native sons unaccounted for, and that this situation is totally unacceptable.

All things considered, I'd recommend that anyone who's interested in *The 'Nam* should go back and give *Vietnam Journal* a look. You won't forget it, and I'm willing to bet you won't regret it.

GRADE: MINT —**David Poettle**

STRIP AIDS U.S.A.

Written & illustrated by VARIOUS, edited by TRINA ROBBINS, BILL SIENKIEWICZ & ROBERT TRIPTOW. Published by LAST GASP

AARGH! #1

Written & illustrated by VARIOUS. Published by MAD LOVE PUBLISHING LTD.

I have nothing against benefit books as a concept. I think it's very laudable that so many comics creators feel strongly enough about one of the vital issues of the day that they want to donate their time and talent to such a worthy cause, and I've often wished I could do more to show my support than just picking up the book that results from their efforts.

On the other hand, I have no great desire to read bad comics from these creators, and the fact that the bad work is published for a good cause and didn't earn them a dime of profit does little to make it go down easier for me. That, in a nutshell, is why I'm disappointed in both of the books I'm talking about now: Last Gasp's *Strip Aids U.S.A.* and Mad Love's *Aargh!* #1.

Both books have a good deal in common. In their own way, both books deal with the controversy over homosexuality and the persecution of the gay community by the rest of society. Both books sport an impressive list of renowned comics talent as contributors. And both books are chock-filled with short, comic-strip-like jabs at the illogic, bigotry and fear that comprise the general public's hostile attitude towards gay people and the looming specter of AIDS. In fact, virtually every piece in both books deals with those topics in one respect or another. And that's where the problem lies.

While I'm sympathetic and concerned over the issues these books are designed to fight, I'm not sure that these books are doing that great a job at it. Let me explain it this way.

As Alan Moore, Trina Robbins and the others are so quick to point out, the majority of the comics audience nowadays is composed of adults. People who are considered old enough and mature enough that they're allowed to drive cars, to vote, to drink, to have children of their own... in other words, to think and to behave in a responsible manner. Logic would dictate that once we adults hear about these books, once we hear about the causes they support, that we will make up our minds about whether or not we support those causes after simply learning the facts. The facts themselves can usually be stated simply, on the inside covers of the benefit book itself.

From Brian Bolland's story in *Aargh!*

SO WHAT AM I GONNA SAY ON THIS PAGE? WELL, I PERSONALLY DON'T LIKE MARCHES. I DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF MANY VOICES RAISED IN HARMONY. A HARMONIOUS ATMOSPHERE REEKS OF STUPIDITY. ART IS FOR ASKING QUESTIONS, NOT BELLOWING ANSWERS!

Therefore, wouldn't the same logic dictate that we don't need to have every single panel of the book ramming that same point home to us? Yes, it would. So why then are the otherwise highly intelligent people that produced these books talking down to us like this?

It just isn't necessary for the creators to spend the entire book giving us their respective views on AIDS and homophobia. The simple fact that they have volunteered their time and their work for a benefit book shows clearly how they feel, and I applaud them all for being so selfless. But whether I support their cause or not, I don't like diatribes, and that's what these books amount to.

To be fair, each book did have a couple of items that were enjoyable. In the *AARGH!* book, Alan Moore's piece with Steve Bissette and Rick Veitch was thought-provoking and enlightening. Brian Bolland's page summarized my own feelings quite well. And, of course, the Dave Sim-Gerhard piece starring "Sacred Wars Roach" was hilarious, as always. In the Last Gasp effort, only the Reed Waller-Kate Worley page endeared itself to me, the remaining pages of that book and *AARGH!* fell somewhat flat.

I think the problem, in most of these cases, is that the creators involved felt perhaps too strongly about the subject matter. By this I don't mean that they should become any less concerned about AIDS or about gay rights, I only mean that because they feel as strongly about it as they do, it may be getting in the way of their capability to produce their best work. In their zeal to educate the public about the severity of the problem, they may be losing their ability to objectively determine whether or not they've created something that makes enjoyable reading. I can't claim that I feel as strongly about AIDS and gay rights as the people that contributed work to these books, possibly that's a failing on my part. I feel strongly enough that I cheerfully picked up both books, and I encourage everyone else to do likewise, there are certainly worse things to spend your money on. And, though it may seem I'm contradicting myself, I hope that the people involved will produce second volumes of both titles rather than giving up once this current foofarah has died down, because both are important issues that deserve nothing less than our joint, full attention. But I don't think I'm out of line when I ask also that the creators treat us like the adults they expect us to be, and

that they expend the little extra effort it would take to ensure that all their stories are enjoyable ones. As I recall, you folks got into this business to be entertainers, not preachers, if you can't do this effectively, then just submit something entertaining to future volumes. Your presence there alone will be enough to show us how you feel.

Ordinarily I'd have given both books a rating of Poor, but because they're both for such worthy causes I don't have the heart.

GRADES: FAIR —David Peattie

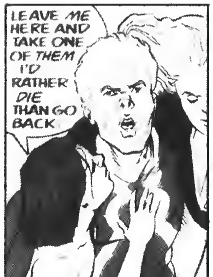
ELEMENTALS #29

Written by JACK HERMAN; illustrated by JACK HERMAN & BILL ANDERSON. Published by COMICO

In all the world, there are few things so disappointing as when a good book falls on its face. I'm not talking about a month where a normally top-rated book does a fill-in by folks that aren't quite as good as the regular team, or any picayune thing like that, I mean a case where the team that's gotten so much praise in the past turns in a job that doesn't quite make it. I'd hoped that such a thing would never befall *The Elementals*, one of the fresher super-hero books on the market right now, and for the longest time it seemed inconceivable, now, I just have to hope it won't happen again.

The issue that sparked this burst of negativity is #29, the second and concluding part of a two-issue story putting the Elementals against a monstrous creature called Statuemaker — so named because his touch will turn a person to stone. Statuemaker's rampage was caused by his creator, an eccentric and pushy scientist that wanted to re-create the circumstances that gave birth to the Elementals while using a still-living test subject. Not the brightest of ideas, which may be why he had to do so secretly and with a comatose patient. Needless to say, the experiment worked well enough to jar the patient out of his coma and to give him super-powers, but in all other respects it was a complete failure, and the Elementals were called in to save the day in #28 of their book. That issue ended with all the members of the team having been turned to stone, leaving us all wondering how they'd be restored to normal in #29.

After reading the issue twice, I confess I'm still wondering. Writer Herman spent quite a bit of time with the Elementals and their cohorts on a sort of astral plane, and after Statuemaker was defeated everyone's souls or spirits returned to Earth. Once on Earth, everyone who'd been turned to stone was restored to human form. Just like that. It's conceivable that the



Elementals #29.

Statuemaker's defeat was all that was necessary to break his spell... after all, it's been done in countless other comics... but Herman slipped up by not showing us what happened. What he's done is make us guess, and making your audience work harder is a sure way to lose readers. Herman also neglected to explain how certain people survived even after their stone bodies had been broken during the conflict with Statuemaker, such as Vortex. In fact, the cover to #29 showed Vortex's body as completely whole... an obvious blooper. Why didn't anyone catch this?

Another aspect of the story that turned me off was the fact that the Statuemaker's final defeat had less to do with the Elementals' heroics than it did with pure luck. I may be old-fashioned, but I thought the point of these little exercises in fantasy was to provide heroic fiction, the title characters should not, for my money, have to depend on good luck to see them through. How would they have defeated Statuemaker if Porter Scott hadn't made a desperate, last-minute tackle? That's what I really wanted to see.

GRADE: FAIR —David Peattie

AKIRA #1-3

Written and illustrated by KATSUHIRO OTOMO; Americanization by JO DUFFY; edited by DAN CHICHESTER. Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP

Akira #3 begins with a 3-page "what has gone before" section. It's indispensable, not because the first two issues were particularly confusing but because they were so *dense*. Weighing in at 64 pages per issue, *Akira* should win some sort of achievement award if only for the number of readers the editors get to shell out $3.50 every month. The question is, of course, is it worth it?

One has to wonder what was going through the minds of the editors at Epic when they decided they wanted to publish a colorized Japanese comic. The decision must have been made when translations of manga such as *Lone Wolf and Cub*, *Mai the Psychic Girl*, *Kamui*, and others were cresting their respective waves. I have a great deal of respect for Epic's editor-in-chief Archie Goodwin, so I will assume he must have known *Akira* would hit the stands sometime after the fad had lost some steam. In other words, Mr. Goodwin and company must have seen something in *Akira* that would make it stand apart from all the other imported Japanese books. Certainly, the fact that the art would look good in color had something to do with it. Ditto the fact that Otomo's artwork looks more like American comic artwork than most manga I've seen. However, I think the thing that makes *Akira* marketable to an American audience—or, at least, a Marvel audience—is the story.

The plotline for the first three issues revolves around a simple question: who, or what, is Akira? There are a number of people running around, frequently with large guns, trying to answer that question. In the hands of a less capable storyteller it might have been difficult to tell who all the players are, but Otomo makes it all seem effortless. First and foremost, there's Kaneda, our "hero." Kaneda is a juvenile delinquent, a not-altogether likeable fellow, who, one hopes, will show more redeeming characteristics somewhere along the line. He has *one* that we know of: a deep and abiding loyalty to his friend Tetsuo. The boys lead a motorcycle club and spend most of their time racing around the city of Neo-Tokyo, wired on whatever drugs Kaneda can wheedle out of his girlfriend, a school dispensary assistant. They are not a gang in the sense of having a particular turf, but generally they have a grand time taunting authority figures, a concept, I understand, that Japanese youth enjoy seeing in their heroes.

Have I mentioned that the story takes place 30 years after the beginning of World War III, in a city built near the bombed-out crater that once was Tokyo? And that the apparently not-completely demolished world is planning to build the next Olympic arena in that bombed-out crater?

While on an illegal jaunt to that very same crater, Tetsuo has an accident related to the sudden appearance of Number 26, a young boy wrapped in the skin of a gray-haired old man. Number 26 is being pursued by government agents and by an underground army. Because of his role in Tetsuo's accident, Kaneda chases Number 26 but loses him; Number 26 can do some pretty impressive stuff, like teleport and cause earthquakes. Kaneda then hooks up with the underground army for a while, not because their cause appeals to him but because there are young, good-looking women in the group and because it's one more way of giving the finger to the powers that be. If the good-looking girl had been with the government, I'm willing to bet there would have been some agonizing over which way Kaneda would have gone.

That was issue #1. In issues #2 and 3, it gets *really* complicated.

In tone and in substance, *Akira* reminds me of several other works. First, there's something marvelously Hitchcockian in the way all the characters are running around, seemingly intent upon tracking down a specific goal and always treading on each others' toes. (Many creators think they're being complex when they're just being cluttered.) As in Hitchcock's best work, everything that happens in *Akira* is clear. We know who the players are and where they are going, both physically and metaphorically. The artwork is both lovingly detailed (right down to the decals on Tetsyo's motorcycle which is way cooler than any mecha I've ever seen) and the action is swiftly paced. The characters are clearly delineated and believable. The scene were the Colonel, ostensibly the villain, shows both deep concern for and barely-controlled impatience with a female version of Number 26 is one of the most disturbing and moving things I've seen in comics in several years.

Akira should appeal to people who don't read comics, particularly science fiction readers. Elements of the story reminded me of the Sprawl stories and novels of William Gibson, the high priest of cyber-punk. Otomo deals with several of Gibson's themes: the fate of directionless youth in a technological world, the possibility of heroism and the value of friendship in what might seem to be unsalvageble individuals.

And last, and this is the kicker, *Akira* reminds me a lot of *The X-Men*, which probably explains why it's being published by Epic. Epic obviously saw the potential for a cross-over audience from Marvel's X-titles to the higher-priced Epic books as well as the possibility of hooking some of the alternative audience into the old fold, the revitalized (translation: post-Shooter) Marvel. Since I assume that the folks at Epic have read the entire story, they must know where the plot is headed and have enough confidence in it to tack on the high pricetag. They might be right. These are the people who somehow manage to get readers to drop $10 or $11 every other month for Moebius reprints. On the other hand, these are the people who published *The Shadowline Saga*. Whatever the case, I am enjoying *Akira* and encourage anyone who thinks they can afford it to pick it up and anyone who can't to cash in their *X-Men* and find out what really alienated mutants do for fun. I only hope that young American artists and writers learn something from this guy.

GRADE: VERY FINE —Jeff Lang

SCREEN REVIEWS

MY SECRET IDENTITY

What with the writers' strike and ensuing confusion, this year's television season has been late starting up. Many of you may have noticed weird little programs creeping into your area. Shows like "Learning the Ropes," featuring Lyle Alzado as a school teacher who moonlights as a wrestler.

Some of these shows are produced in Canada, where the strike has only had the effect of providing more work.

So what does this have to do with *Amazing Heroes*, I hear you ask?

One of the Canadian shows that just might turn up in your area is a delightful little sitcom entitled *My Secret Identity*.

This show is the story of Andrew Clements (Jerry O'Connell from *Stand By Me*) who gets zapped by a photon-beam generator while he's visiting his next door neighbor, an eccentric inventor named Dr. Jeffcoate (Derek McGrath of SCTV).

Andrews gains super-speed, invulnerability and the ability to float (in order to move through the air he uses aerosol cans.) Naturally, being a comics fan, he decides to become a super-hero and promptly dubs himself Ultraman (much to the consternation of Dr. Jeffcoate.)

Now then, what flaw dooms most shows about teenagers? Right! They all seem to be Hollywood prodigy types—precocious plus. Not our Andrew.

Andrew reads comics, hates homework and has just discovered girls. While he's a pretty good guy, he does have a spark of rebellion in him. He also has a pretty good imagination.

Each episode contains some sort of moral (for the little ones, dontcha know), but it arises naturally from the circumstances of the plot and is not forced. The show's writers do not insult anyone's intelligence.

The pilot episode found Andrew gaining his powers, meeting a cute little redhead and then saving her from kidnappers (fortunately, she was blindfolded so she didn't see how he did it).

Throughout the pilot, Jerry O'Connell made Andrew come across as a prettty average kid with an averge kid's concerns. Dr. Jeffcoate added further substance thanks to Derek McGrath's ability to combine crustiness with an underlying humanity.

Although Wanda Cannon (mom,) and Marsha Moreau (sis) haven't really got a lot to do on the show, they come across a real people (a radical concept for sitcoms.)

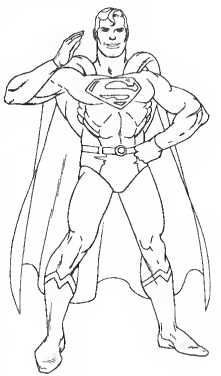
All in all, this program can entertain you whether you are a comics fan or not. In fact, neither non-fans nor fans will be insulted by this intelligent, humorous and innovative little show. (And, oh yes! The special effects work pretty darn well, too!)

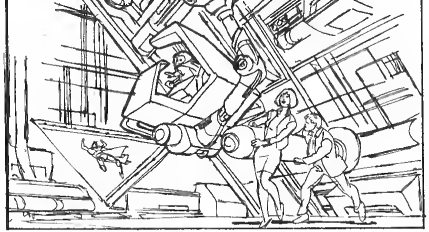
GRADE: MINT —Sheldon Wiebe

SUPERMAN

The animation, while not that of the grand old Fleischers, is good. Certainly better than the Filmation attempt of 20 years ago. The poses are better, Superman appears more lithe and less wooden than he did as a member of Hanna-Barbera's *Superfriends*. His

He's back on your tube.





Action in the classic Fleischer tradition.

muscles flex, his cape flows as it should.

Then there's the characterization, as important as (if not more than) the animation itself. I'm pleased here too. Some fans won't care for Clark's regression to wilting wimp, but such behavior always supported Kent's thin disguise, as well as added a touch of sly humor. Lois operates as Ol' Snoop 'n Scoop, her loathing for Clark no more than tongue deep. Jimmy Olsen is young and impulsive—he flies through the City Room of the *Planet* on a skateboard—but with a certain humility that's always endeared him to me. Perry is an ulcerous "Great Caesar's Ghost," and who wants more?

Those who liked John Byrne's changes on Lex Luthor will be pleased to know that the archvillain gets to keep Lexcorp. He remains a billionaire industrialist—but with more than a streak of the old mad scientist in him. He wears a kryptonite ring sometimes to keep the Man of Steel at bay. But story editor Marv Wolfman has borrowed Lex's personality from Gene Hackman, not John Byrne. The fusion won't make everyone happy, but it does keep the truism "the villain gets the best lines" operational.

Speaking of lines, the dialogue is bright—almost witty compared to that of other Superman cartoons. A couple of examples:

Lois: "Luthor can't help but hide something, Jimmy. It's his nature. Just like I can't help but write good copy."

Luthor: "Miss Morganberry, my daddy always told me you could never have enough chocolate ice cream, real estate, or money. Of course, he's now fat, homeless, and broke...."

So far, Superman himself hasn't fired off a really good zinger, but we shouldn't expect him to. For Superman is not so much a character as an archetype, a myth figure, and such are *doers*, not talkers. His more human side, Kent, should get the good lines. And he does, as when an explosion on a boat bound for China causes the reporter to lose a suitcase containing "classical disco" tapes: "I think it's plain, Lois. Someone in China doesn't like Mozart."

Well, that's who the characters are and what they say, but what are the stories about?

The accent is definitely on action in "Destroy the Defendroids." The speed with which Wolfman's pilot episode moves reminds me of the Fleischer cartoons. As a matter of fact, "Defendroids" seems to be a cross between "The Mechanical Monsters" and "Billion Dollar Limited," two *Superman* shorts of the '40s. Luthor continually upstages the Man of Steel with robots as part of an elaborate scheme to rob a billion dollar gold shipment.

Sometimes *Superman* writer Martin Pasko shifts the emphasis to mystery. In "Fugitive From Space," a tidy addition to the "Which One is The Villain?" theme, Superman battles a gigantic, hideous (for Saturday morning kidvid) monster.

He battles another nasty beastie in "By the Skin of a Dragon's Teeth." Luthor's greed frees a petrified dragon, which goes on a rampage through China.

The barrelling forward of the plot hides some minor flaws. For example, why should Luthor's explosion in "Defendroids" cause a lava flow? It was nowhere near a volcano, was it? And, on the technical side, notice Superman's *yellow* "S" on a *red* chest emblem in "Fugitive." Yet these 18-minute stories provide mystery and adventure enough, action and excitement enough to cover any of their blemishes.

But even better, in my view, are the four-minute snapshots from Superman's "Family Album." Again, some fans of the current comics will burn at changes: Ma and Pa are old when they find baby Kal-El. He has all his powers from infancy. Nevertheless, these tales are little gems. My favorite so far has been "The Supermarket" by Cherie Wilkerson, a hilarious and true-to-life turn about the Smallville grocery store. Watching it, I couldn't decide whether little Clark alone or all little children have power—the power to drive Mom nuts in public!

Oh, I like the new animated *Superman* for a lot of reasons, not the least of which being *self-contained stories*. Oh glory! Bliss! Unlike his current comics adventures, on TV when the show's over it's *over*. I don't have to fly after Superman into Garfield's or Ernest's territory, trying to finish a "story" that never really ends. (But then again, I'd like to see Superman and Garfield mix it up.) I don't have to keep track of a story*line*, tangled like a long telephone cord in the dark. On TV, I see a beginning, a middle, and an end to the thing!

No crossovers, either! Only one is promised—Wonder Woman—and for the rest of the 13 planned episodes, I get to deal only with the mythos I want to deal with, see only the Man I paid my four bits to see—Superman!

Yes, I guess what I like best about the new series is its freedom from the restrictions and the convolutions of the comics. My kids like it because it gives them *Superman*, not the stupor-man wading hip-deep through the sudsy mess his comics have become. What gradeschooler can make sense of the convoluted continuity, the soap opera-ish plodding, of Supe's unfunny funnybooks? For that matter, what is there in these to attract non-comics fans of any age?

Ruby Spears has made Superman attractive and accessible again to the people who first made him fly, the kids. And by shrewdly incorporating elements from the Richard Donner movie, as well as adding the warm Family Album spots, the producers have opened the door for an even broader audience of parents and other adults.

Whether the new animated *Superman* will have any effect on the comics which bear his name remains to be seen. I hope so. Meanwhile, if the series doesn't give a small group of comics fans what they want, it certainly gives Superman fans what they want—the Man himself.

I'm a Superman fan. So are my kids.

So, I think, is everybody at heart.

GRADE: VERY FINE —*Gary D. Robinson*

"Comics in Review" reviewers rate a comic's story and art using the same system that comics collectors use to rate the outward condition of their comics. For those of you who don't happen to be collectors, the ratings are, in descending order...

PRISTINE MINT
MINT
NEAR MINT
VERY FINE
FINE
VERY GOOD
GOOD
FAIR
POOR
COVERLESS

Amazing READERS

Send your comments on AH or any comics-related topic to: 1800 Bridgegate Street, Suite 101, Westlake Village, CA 91361

ROBERT MORGAN
Indianapolis, IN

Sidney Needs Help

[*Addressed to Sidney Mellon.*]

I am an avid comic book collector, and my reading has kept me from reading your article in *AH* #131. I have mixed reactions about you and the article.

I realize you are entitled to your opinions, and no one can make you change your mind about your choice in comic books and/or reading material. However, we are entitled to our own opinions about what we like and dislike, and cannot be changed by you, and should not be considered lower or higher than you because of our preferences.

In *Maus*, the story is based on real life, just using anthropomorphic actors. *X-Men* is a fictional story, using human actors. Each has its own pros, and each has its own cons.

Also in the first letter, you use some "humor" about Ken Holewczynski's name, and his company. The humor was done at a *bad* time. An offensive comment is not funny to the person it is directed at, as you will agree with, seeing the letter col's contents.

Your defense proves Mr. Holewczynski correct, albeit in a different way. He stated you were immature. Your responses (especially to Mr. Jones's letter) in which you tried to defend yourself against everything right down to misspelling of "Gerard," showed it. A mature person should be able to accept his mistake(s).

I am not using humor in here. I seriously believe you need professional help of some kind. Your obsession with super-hero comics is a true form of mental illness. Super-hero comics *are* good, but a refusal to read *any* comic but a super-hero comic shows how much you could handle the real world. You couldn't. You can take it only with a large dose of fantasy, much like a five-year-old. Also, your obsession with Frank Miller may show the need of professional help.

Your comments to Gerard Jones were uncalled for. I, too, would be offended at being cussed at, but 1) to attack someone for his tastes in literature, and 2) to say he is misspelling his name is plain idiotic. I defend my tastes in comics from someone like you. I am offended at the thought that if 100% of my comic collection is not super-hero, I am called elitist, conceited, and egotistical. Unfortunately, elitist means "with most powerful group, etc.," and a diverse reading list is not "elite." Conceited and egotistical are good descriptions of you. You are too conceited to accept the fact that you made some mistakes.

In defense of Gerard Jones, I have something to say to you. *I* have known many people named "Mr. Mellen," and if I were to take a poll, they would say that "Mellen" is correct, not "Mellon." Don't criticize because of a name.

I, too, agree with Mr. McKeogh in that comic books provide us with only a small part of the "Human Condition." To experience all of Human Condition is much different than reading a comic book. In order for Human Condition to work in comics, it must be changed. To get real Human Condition, you must learn to accept there is life after comics.

Another thought—an example of being egotistical would be thinking that a comic great like Frank Miller is as obsessed with comics as he is, and thinking that Mr. Miller would write a letter of profuse thanks to him, for comments usually only made over a rock star druggie fan, and saying that what the man was doing was interpreting works for the masses.

Though, after I give my age, I expect you to dismiss my comments as being an "elitist's ramblings," I

JOSEPH GOWEN/ALEXANDER ILICH

CATHY BERRY

want you to think of something. What is elitist, what is conceited, and what is egotistical. Compare your answers to: Sidney Mellen refuses to read anything non-super hero. Sidney Mellen cannot accept the fact he made some mistakes. And Sidney Mellen thinks he has faced life through comic books.

Think, Sidney. Think and compare. I do not expect this to be printed, as I am just a "wet-behind-the-ears adolescent" 13-year-old, but please think about this, and compare.

●*Thunks for writing in, Robert. I'm sure everyone appreciates your support. Especially Gerard Jones, who's been down since a certain fan-mag started printing wild and demeaning rumors about him.—CWM*

ROBERT PILK
Bristol, TN

Sidney Like He Is

I've read your super-great column, first in "Comics Week" and then in "Amazing Heroes" and may I say that you're the only person in comics who tells it like it is?

Mr. Mellon (or may I call you Sidney?), I was shocked to see your recent column with letters from your detractors.

All I can say is that their letters stunk, Sidney, and you really put them in their place with your snappy put-downs. I was so inspired I almost jumped up from the couch and shouted "Make Mine Marvel!"

I mean, what do these jerk critics want, anyway? They're either raving about new books like "Maus" that have nothing to do with super-heroes at all, or they're going on and on about some old comic no one ever heard of, like "Pogo" or "Uncle Scrooge." What do these clowns want from comics, anyway? Diversity?

I was so angry I went back and re-read "Secret Wars II" to calm down. (Say, when are they going to re-print that classic series in a hard-cover, signed and numbered limited edition? I'll bet you, Sidney, with all your connections, could get the ball rolling!)

Anyway, Sidney (or may I call you Sid?), I was thinking of the future and wondering if maybe Marvel would someday do a comic on the story of your life. After all, they did one on the Pope, didn't they?

I can see it now. "This Man, This Mellon." Or maybe "Not All My Mellons Can Save Me." How about "If This Be My Mellon." Or my personal favorite, "A Blind Mellon Shall Lead Them."

Oh, and by the way, Sid, are you one of the Mellonville Mellons? From your picture, you look a lot like Mayor Tommy Shanks, with just a touch of Edith Prickly thrown in.

To close, I'll just say Excelsior, Face Front, Make Mine Marvel.

P.S. Is it true that there are religious cults in L.A. that worship Sidney Mellon? I heard they're called Mellonites and try to sell Marvel comics to people in airports.

J.M. MOCKO
Seattle, WA

Sour Grapes

It's been a long time since I've read a column as self-serving, condescending, and downright chauvinistic as Sidney Mellon's piffle in the March *Amazing Heroes*. Each paragraph simply oozed ludicrous disdain for women, and Mellon's ridiculous assertion that only HE could fulfill the role of women's "savior." How else does one explain the swell-headed and utterly silly statement that "with more experienced male guidance, they (women) may begin to discover the true purpose of graphic literature"? Indeed, the very last sentence in Mellon's column fatuously declares, "For with you I shall share all my knowledge of comics publishing." Fortunately, Mellon managed to drop in a plug for his graphic novel trilogy, *Thunderskull*, which is supposed to lay the foundation for his credentials as a person with solid knowledge within the industry.

Sorry, Sid baby, I've never heard of you or your graphic novel trilogy. For someone who claims to be so concerned with women getting their fair shake in comics, you betray the strangest notions. First of all, I count three references to "girls" in your meandering drivel. The correct word is "women."

You also seem to feel it is necessary to describe women in the industry first and foremost as visual objects. There's "exotic" Ann Nocenti, "fair" Karen Berger, Diana Schultz has "fair tresses," and most laughable (or sad, if you consider this cluck's access to space in *Amazing Heroes*), Mellon's comments about Deni Loubert. We are treated to an endless description of Ms. Loubert's "stylish black stretch pants and highheels." Sid tells us she is the "Joan Jett" of comics, with "wide brown eyes and hair," and "possesses a beauty that the poets might praise as like unto Sigourney Weaver's, or even a mature Kitty Pryde's." But does Mellon tell us Ms. Loubert's strengths and weaknesses as a comic book publisher? To quote Mellon: "And what is inside Denny? I wouldn't know."

Additionally, I must admit, I'm not much of a cat yronwode fan. Her rambling editorials strike me as egotistical and odd. But to suggest, as Mellon does, that the increase in quality at Eclipse is due to yronwode's new husband makes my blood seethe. Ms. yronwode, for good or ill, makes her own editorial decisions at Eclipse.

By the way, Sid, since you know so much about the comic book industry, that colorist you identified as "Carol Gafford" is in fact Carl Gafford, a well-known figure in comics for over 15 years.

I'll end my diatribe by identifying what I perceive to be your problem with women in comics, Mr. Mellon. Again, taken directly from your text: "What you may not know is that they also dress weird at parties and act real conceited and if somebody asks them to dance they pretend they don't hear him."

Sounds like sour grapes to me, Mr. Mellon.

NANCY A. COLLINS
New Orleans, LA

Confessions of a "Wannabe"

Congratulations on your coverage of Captain America, one of my long-standing guilty pleasures.

I found Dwight Decker's article on "Wannabes" to have personal relevance. I, like every other comics fan over the age of 12, attempted to get in on the black-and-white small press boom of a couple years back. Unfortunately, I discovered having a writer in Louisiana, an artist in Cincinnati, yet another in Los Angeles, an inker in New York and a rather inexperienced neonate publisher in Illinois does not make for a snap-to-it creative team. Alas and alack, despite a signed (albeit laughable) contract, my mini-series did not make it beyond a few pencilled pages. The biggest problem seems to have been that almost everyone involved was a "wannabe," the publisher most of all. I have since been accosted by local fanboys and aspiring artists who have decided, because I Tried and Failed, I know something about the funnybook business. When confronted by fourth-rate Marvel poses and hackneyed storylines and grammatical errors that reflect far too many hours spent reading mutant books rather than Real Literature (i.e., anything without pictures), I inwardly cringe and find myself telling them to forget it or Wait Until You Have More Experience. As Decker mentioned, this usually falls on deaf ears. How do you tell someone that he has enough talent with a pencil to amuse himself and his friends on an amateur basis, but forget about going pro? Or that there's more to art than some overdeveloped jerk in a skin-tight suit flexing his pecs? (I distinctly remember a heated argument with some fanboy, a few years back, who was outraged that I didn't think Wendy Pini's *Elfquest* artwork deserved to be hung in the Louvre!) And I commend Mr. Decker for giving Freddy the Straight Dope. If he overdosed on it, that's not your fault. As my grandaddy used to say: "Don't ask the question unless you're willing to hear the answer."

●*Of course, now that Nancy has become a regular contributor to AH, particularly as one of the mainstays of the all-new "Comics in Review," she's no longer a wannabe, but rather, to paraphrase Sidney Mellon, a bona-fide pro fan journalist.—CWM*

RANDY H. CRAWFORD
Grand Rapids, MI

More Kevins

[Addressed to Kevin Dooley] Since the Kevin Awards were your own opinions there's obviously no room for debate. The only reason why I'd care if you print this letter is that I agree that Nocenti, Austen, Williams, JLI, Sam & Max, *Neat Stuff*, *Dreamery*, *Usagi*, *Mai*, *French Ice*, *Boris*, *Excalibur*, *Killing Joke* and the Weasel Patrol have all contributed to an improvement in the state of the comic book art form in their various ways.

As to those categories where my opinion might differ from your own, well, if you think *Love & Rockets* is better than *Concrete*, Sam & Max is funnier than a *Gumby Summer Fun Special* or Honeymooners are better adapted than those gorgeous Aliens then you are simply entitled to your opinion.

What prompts me to write, however, is the absence of a variety of traditional comic book genres. It seems like everything on your list is either super-heroes or funnybooks. Nothing wrong with that, if that's what you like best then you're eminently suited to edit *Amazing Heroes*. But there are other categories:

Best War Comic: *Viet Nam Journal*

Best Romance Comic: *Omaha the Cat Dancer*

Best Horror Comic: *Hellblazer*

Best Science Fiction Comic: Keith Laumer's *Retief*

Best Western: *Motel*

Okay, so nobody's putting out a new western this year. Blame that on whoever cancelled *Wardrums*. My point is that I keep hearing that super-heroes have taken over the business and these other types of comics aren't being produced anymore, when in my opinion some of the best material ever produced in those genres is coming out right now, this very instant, as you read this.

Oh, and "Funnest Comic Mag *Neat Stuff*?" Kev. I collect, buy, enjoy and adore Peter Bagge's *Neat Stuff*, but

MARK YOUNG

what I like about it is the insightful suburban slice-of-life insights and so-true humanisms—hardly my idea of fun. If "funnest" was a word, then *Flaming Carrot* would be "it."

Of course that's only my opinion and you're entitled to it.

●*Someday soon (when I'm really desperate to fill a lettercol) I'll do the Chris Awards. Until then if anyone has a "best comics" list of their own we'd love to print it.*

By the way, nobody has cancelled Wardrums. *William Messner-Loebs keeps telling folks he's going to finish it soon, and as soon as he does Fantagraphics will print it.—CWM*

RANDY H. CRAWFORD
Grand Rapids, MI

Desert Island Comics

It was fun and easy remembering all the great comics I'd enjoy having with me on a deserted island, the tricky part was narrowing it down to 10. Here they are:

R. Crumb's Bible Of Filth.

Exciting Adventures Of The Black Cat Giant Size #63.

(British hardcover edition of Steranko's) *Captain America.*

The Miller and Mazzucchelli *Daredevil* trade paperback.

A collected *Dark Knight* hardcover.

D.R. and Quinch's Totally Awesome Guide To Life.

Marvel Masterworks #1 (Fantastic Four).

The Outer Space Spirit.

Watchmen hardcover.

X-Men trade paperback (Claremont/Byrne/Austin Dark Phoenix saga).

Yes they are. They are too. Yes they are! Look, it doesn't matter what size you print them or how many pages they have or what kind of paper you print them on, I've seen enough comic books to know one when I see one, and Comic books are most certainly what these are! Yes they are too. Look, if the term "comic book" gets you so upset, why don't you go read a newspaper or a novel or a bloody fanzine and leave us comic book fans in peace. There's no point in trying to talk sense to me because my mind's made up and the above list is a list of comic books.

Yes. They are.

P.S.: Yes I was surprised that four Marvel comic books made the list. Nostalgia value, I guess.

Later P.S.: What do you mean, disconcerting?

●*I get to play too! It's my magazine and I get to play too!*

*1)*New Gods *#3, 2)*Love & Rockets Trade Paperback vol. III, *3)* Cerebus: High Society, *4)*Usagi Yojimbo Book One, *5)* Buck Godot: Psmith, *6)* The Journey Saga vol. 1, *6)* At Home With Rick Geary, *7)* Any Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead, *8) A British* Swamp Thing *reprint, the one with the last battle with Arcane, 9) the collected EC* Shock SuspenStories vol. II, *and finally if I was really all alone on a desert island I'd definitely want* The Collected Omaha, *for all the wrong reasons.*

Hmmm, half Fantagraphics, looks mighty fishy. So help me, folks, I'm not just kissing up to the boss here. I guess it just means I work for the right company.—CWM

RON HOGAN
Melrose, MA

Comics and Taste

On the subject of bad taste and comic books: Should it be enough that comics provide entertainment? Certainly, entertainment is worth something, but for 75 cents I could get a Pepsi and some gum and be entertained for the same amount of time the average Marvel or DC takes to read. So why should I spend the money on a comic book instead?

I do it because, unlike a soda, a comic book will leave me with something to think about afterwards, and can also be used again—I'm not blowing the money on 10 quick minutes of pleasure and a burp. Of course, with a lot of comics, it's not a lot more than that, but you get the idea. The comic has to have some sort of substance, beyond being simply a comic book, or there is no point to its existence.

Does this mean comics should be held up to the same standards as other entertainment media? Not really. For one thing, if we did that, most of it would fail miserably, even the stuff touted as proving comics are as important an art form as anything else. Let's face it, *Longbow Hunters* is little more than a *Dirty Harry* film with Green Arrow instead of Clint Eastwood. *Watchmen* is a noble experiment in style—an attempt to write superheroes as real people in the style of authors like John LeCarre and Graham Greene—and it's one of the most intellectual comics in a long time, but in the end it shows that super-heroes will always have some element of cardboard cards, unreal elements that deflate most of Moore's intent. Sure, Ozymandias is cool, but would the smartest guy on Earth just spend all his time doing acrobatic stunts and imitating David Bowie's Man Who Fell to Earth? Or come up with such a stupid plan to save the Earth from itself?

Which isn't to say everything sucks in the final analysis. Certainly *Love and Rockets* is worth reading, as well as *Cerebus*. But lest I sound elitest, I would also recommend *GI JOE*, which is interesting in that Larry Hama's personal philosophy is such an integral part of the heroes—he portrays the characters. And the Japanese translations have a fresh new outlook on the medium that is a welcome sight to eyes jaded by the Marvel Universe.

To return to judging comics in a style like that of other media, comics almost fails to mix well with any other medium. The illustrated classics of the '50s were nothing in comparison to the originals, the real books upon

PALMER WORLEY

ETCHIN GREEN LANTERN CLOAK BLACK PANTHER TYROC TEMPEST DR. MIDNITE MACHETE FALCON ONYX VIXEN CYBORG CAPTAIN MARVEL INVISIBLE KID MRTH BRONZE TIGER RORTHWIND POWERMAN BLACK LIGHTNING JET

KENT MILTON

which they were based. Comics and film—well, we have *Superman* (four times), *Howard the Duck*, and *Red Sonja* for starters. Ok, so *Red Sonja* wasn't originally a comic book, but how many Marvel zombies know that? Television and comics—again, *Superman*, the *Fantastic Four*—minus the Torch, and, of course, *Captain Justice*. What about comics and music? Not having read P. Craig Russell's illustrated operas yet (I'm still waiting to get the trade paperback), but having tried it, I know it's possible to read any comic book and have any music playing in the background without any difference whatsoever. Seriously, *GI JOE* works with Mahler's Second and Beethoven's Ninth just as well as it does with Shriekback and the Cocteau Twins, totally unlike film and music, where music to some extent controls the mood or pace as the viewer watches. For a quick example, would you watch *Repo Man* if it had a Morricone score; would it be the same film as the *Repo-Man* with songs by Fear and the Circle Jerks? In some cases, film and music are irreversibly entwined: who can hear "Fanfare for the Common Man" today and not think of the Olympics? Probably the same person who watches *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* and cannot remember that film's theme afterwards?

Now where was I? Oh, right, I remember—judging comic books on guidelines of taste. Certainly it should be done, but not with guidelines for other media. And I'm not talking the Code here, since that is intended to be a moral guideline system. I'm talking about aesthetics and quality of writing, not specific content. Content is, after all, a relative thing. In Wertham's time, the homosexual camp aspects of *Batman* and *Wonder Woman* were cause for moral outrage; today, Lawrence Burdick can demand, in his review of *Wonder Woman* in *AH* #130, that the lesbian aspects of Paradise Island's society should be portrayed to give the book greater realism. If the attitudes towards homosexuality had gone unchanged since Wertham's time, Burdick would be decried as a pervert. Perez probably will not examine the lesbian aspects of the Amazons anytime soon; but today he can if he wants to, and if DC will let him (which probably explains why he isn't). But then again, Wonder Woman has many other unexplored aspects from which a story could be written.

CARLOS M. FERNANDEZ, JR.
Norwalk, CA

Years for Supergirl

[Addressed to Kevin Dooley.]

I am a new reader to *Amazing Heroes*, and I was surprised to find you at the helm. I recall reading your many letters to the comics ages ago and I was pleasantly surprised to see your name. Now for some comments on your editorial.

You are the first comic reader that seemed to have been 'touched' by Supergirl's demise in *Crisis* #7. I myself actually put the comic down and cried, something I've been made ashamed to admit by other so-called fans.

I experienced the anguish Supes felt and Marv Wolfman and George Perez brilliantly portrayed. Her words to her beloved cousin, "Because you are so good," touched me deeply. I felt Kal-El's pain as if Kara had been my cousin, and had just died for me. No one else up until now has seemed to have felt even a smidge of that.

I too was so let down by nearly as much as the highly publicized and rather stupid meeting between Superman and Wonder Woman. Never have I looked forward to anything in comics so much, and never have I ever been let down so much by the Byrne/Perez cop out. Enough of that.

I once believed that John Byrne cared about the character of Superman. Now I realize he had an ego problem, and all he wanted to do was to be the writer that destroyed Superman. Don't get me wrong, I loved the new stories and art. It was the whole changeover that I hated. Another brilliant man has let his success go to his head.

I hope whoever finally takes over on Supes (I once heard it would be George Perez but now I don't know) will extricate him from the hole John Byrne put him into.

●*No sooner did Carlos find Kevin, his comics soul-mate, than Kevin was gone, flown accross the continent to do battle to protect the integrity of the characters they both loved so. It's almost like something out of a novel.*

But seriously folks, last I heard George Perez will *be doing a new Superman book (or perhaps a very old one?) beginning in the near future.—CWM*

CHARLES DIVINCENTI
Metairie, LA

The Word is Out

Hey, you should have told me sooner! A few years ago I re-entered the comic world purchasing familiar DC and Marvel titles of former collecting habits. Some time later the clerk at my local specialty shop suggested a copy of *Amazing Heroes* to help reacquaint

myself with past/current publications. Very pleased, folks, most pleased. I never dreamed there existed a mag such as this, complete with "news" up-dates, scoops, inside-stuff, etc. I found the "Coming Distractions" feature a great help when deciding to give some third-world titles a look. In my best Martin Short Accent . . . "I must say. . . ." I've decreased my mainstream purchases while attempting to sample the varied independents. Certainly trash abounds (Marvel's X-Phlegm fetish for one . . . or four!), yet there exists some talent out yonder—and that doesn't always mean D.C. & Marvel. It's sort of like the Holy Grail . . . you just gotta keep looking.

Just a final thought—how long have you had this problem of people sending missiles to your mailing address?!#

●*Fantagraphics just signed a Stategic Arms Limitation Treaty with the U.S. Post Office, so we're finally able to take the missile advisory off "Amazing Readers."—CWM*

SIMON DELMONTE
Forest Hills, NY

Oh No, Not Again

Once again the Big Two are on the verge of giving the unsuspecting fanboy two more Big Series. If previous Big Series (to borrow Mike Barr's phrase) are any indication, DC and Marvel are about to dupe the comic-reading public. For this reason, I write, hoping to change things before it's too late.

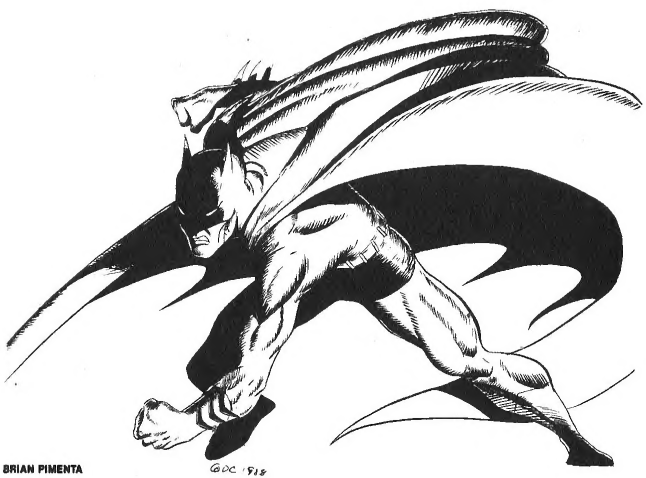
At first, we got *Crisis* and *Secret Wars*. I admit that the former was needed, and that the latter was the first of its kind, so I excuse those. I also excuse *Legends* as a necessary agent of definition. However, all other Big Series are greed-induced travesties. Readers of a handful of books find themselves pushed into reading far more than they can truly afford. Sometimes, they are left hanging, for they have no access to direct-sales books. But the Big Two don't really care. The Secret Millenial Infernal Invasion Fall will make each company a mint.

I did not buy a single Big Series. I couldn't afford to, and also was disinterested with all except *Crisis* and *Legends*. Instead, I read my usual books, and the fanzines. If I was confused, the writer would usually clarify things sooner or later. But I never bought a Big Series. They were duds, especially *Millenium*, judging from the reviews. But we keep seeing more, why? It's not for reasons of quality, or even of experimentation anymore. It's simple greed.

Last year, I wrote to Dick Giordano before *Millennium* came out. Obviously, one lone fan cannot make a difference, but all of us can, if we want to. *Invasion!* and *Inferno* will probably not be must reading. They will probably equal Englehart's folly in overblown ads and undersized plot. Thus, I ask those fans tired of the Big Series to stop buying them. Buy only what you normally read. I will not touch either, nor will I buy *Starman* when *Firestorm* crosses over into it. I will simply ignore the Big Series. I don't think I'll be missing much. I hope the fans will join me.

Instead, save your money for something worthwhile. Buy something of quality. Buy the trade edition of *Watchmen*, or even an honest-to-goodness novel. Go to a good film. Take a date. Go to a Mets game (or whatever team you like). And take 25 cents of your savings and buy a stamp. Write a letter of complaint to your favorite Big Two executive editor. Tell Dick and/or Mark that you didn't buy the big series for a reason. Maybe then, after a one-two punch of low sales and lower esteem, will the Big Two stop their games.

●*Does anybody out there like these Big Series things? If you do, please write. I don't want people to think we're trying to start some kind of anti-Big Series crusade here at AH (good luck with your crusade though, Simon).—CWM*



BRIAN PIMENTA

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STROM'S INDEX

(or what Strom can make up after one too many cups of Cafe Mocha)

by Dave Strom

(Apologies to Harper's Index)

Wolverine's weight in pounds: 195

After bullets from his old wounds are removed: 175

Odds of a teenage super-hero suffering from angst once per story: 1:2

From pimples: 1:infinity

Number of pints of blood Batman loses each year due to getting bullets, knives, and throwing stars in the left shoulder: 4

Number of pints lost by those who send the bullets, knives, and stars: 67

Odds of a dead super-hero staying dead: 1:2

Odds if the super-hero was ever one of the X-Men: 1:50

Average number of times Spider-Man's knees are higher than his head in each issue of *Web of Spider-Man*: 8

Odds of the Rev. Donald Wildmon, head of the American Family Association, testifying before a future Congressional committee that the new Mighty Mouse once sniffed cocaine: 3:1

Odds of the members believing him and not bothering to check on the facts (in the disputed scene, Mighty Mouse sniffed a crushed flower, not cocaine): 150:1

Percentage of comic books on the market today that are black-and-white: 12

Same percentage in five years, if Marvel and DC get their way: 0

Percentage of comics called "hot" in their ads that go up in price: 2

That go down: 90

Percentage of *Watchmen* readers who understood the ending and admit that Rorschach is dead: 9

Number of words Daredevil can say in the time he takes to throw one punch: 21

Average number of times per issue that mutant hatred is mentioned in *X-Men*, *X-Factor*, and *New Mutants*: 3

Average number of times race hatred is mentioned: 0

Proportion of the priests and preachers in comic books that the reader is supposed to love to hate: 7:8

Cubic acres underneath Central Park not occupied by secret super-hero/super-villain bases: 1

Cubic acres occupied by sewer pipes and power cables: 1

Number of comic book characters, not including Superman, portrayed on live-action television with the same powers and personalities they have in the comics: 0

Odds of all the above information being accurate, since I made it all up: 1:1,000

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